

**PERCEIVED GENDER ROLE CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE: MEXICAN  
AMERICAN GANG MEMBERS**

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By

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PERCEIVED GENDER ROLE CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE: MEXICAN  
AMERICAN GANG MEMBERS

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine gender role conflicts (the inability to express emotions or feelings) within the lived experiences of former Mexican American gang members. This study involved exploring the relationship between restricted emotionality, machismo, and violence. O'Neil developed the theory of gender role conflict in 1980 to identify areas of stress in masculine behavior, cognitions, affective behavior, and the unconscious. According to O'Neil (1981a), "Gender role conflict is a psychological state in which gender roles (masculine, feminine, or androgynous roles) have negative consequences or impacts on the persons" (p. 203). The extreme result of conflict is the limitation of a person's ability to ascertain his or her highest and best human potential or to limit another person from reaching his or her inherent capacity. A review of literature revealed no research on the distinctive subculture of Mexican American gang members and gender role conflict. The focus of this study was one of O'Neil's six patterns of gender role conflict: restricted emotionality. This study involved examining machismo from various perspectives, including exploring the anthropological roots of a patriarchal society as a possible infrastructure to misogyny and strict traditional male ideologies such as hypermasculinity. This study helped elucidate how the dominant culture plays an active role in influencing the identity and behavior of a subcultural group, specifically Mexican American gang members. The electronic version of this dissertation is available free at Ohiolink ETD Center, [www.ohiolink.edu/etd](http://www.ohiolink.edu/etd).

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **Overview: Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to examine individual gender role conflict experienced by Mexican American gang members who are often particularly masculinized in their identity through social definition, racism, devaluation, or violation of others (O'Neil, Good, & Holmes, 1995; M. Torres, 2013). Lazur and Majors (1995) contended that men of color must define their own masculinity by their own culture, but to survive, they must act according to society's culture. The privilege of Anglo-Saxon acculturation does not evoke the same benefits of education, opportunities, housing, and employment to Mexican American males. Cervantes (2005) contended that expressing feelings and frustrations of Mexican American males is not accepted in U.S. society because of stereotypic images and racist inaccuracies. Mexican American males follow a set of machismo constructs, adhere to strict traditional male ideals of macho behavior such as hypersexuality or hypermasculinity and aggression, and resist following relational rules in committed relationships.

Additionally, the study involved exploring and evaluating the situational contexts of a gang subculture through the social and inherent cultural scripts that proscribe aggression and violence because of gender role conflict. The men in the subculture often adhere to self-imposed strict sexist or restrictive gender roles (O'Neil, 1981b, 1982) that develop into gender role conflict distress manifested in psychological symptomatology such as aggression and violence (Good, Borst, & Wallace, 1994; Mahalik, Cournoyer, DeFranc, Cherry, & Napolitano, 1998).

Mayo (1997) contended that Latin families, where Latin refers to any male or female from Mexico, South or Central America, or Caribbean countries, face an erosion of cultural traditions and familial life through unemployment, poverty, and the deterioration of the patriarchal structure. Mayo also contended that the dominant U.S. culture has given Mexican Americans a negative profile as macho men who adhere to a machismo lifestyle. These men are often depicted as drunks, absent fathers, and abusive and violent to both women and children. Mayo contended that the opposite of macho men are nurturing, caring, and protective fathers who love their children and wife.

Falicov (2007) posited that the polarization of freedom and power given to Mexican women threatened immigrant Mexican males and affected family values and traditions of masculinity. Mexican fathers, considered the patriarch of their family and its extended members with the right to control their entire household, found themselves challenged by the dominant society. Falicov posited that researchers indicated strict patriarchal parenting was leading youths to attempt suicide.

Mahalik et al. (1998) contended that social norms are rules and standards that often constrain a man's ability to express his emotions without exposing his femininity to others. These norms are often confusing because of the contradictory messages men often learn in early socialization from parents, such as do not act like a girl, do not cry, and do not be a wuss. Socialization messages tell men to be good and respectful to women, but they are also expected to act tough, aggressive, unemotional, and logical. Mahalik (1999), O'Neil et al. (1995), and Thompson and Pleck (1995) contended that conformity to these demands and standards results in health problems, devaluation of women or other men, psychological distress, and loss of interpersonal relationships.

### **Background: Gender Role Conflict**

This study involved examining machismo from various perspectives, including the anthropological roots of a patriarchal society, as a possible infrastructure to misogyny and strict traditional male ideologies such as hypermasculinity that result in violence. The study elucidated how social influence by the dominant culture plays a role in influencing the identity and behavior of a subcultural group, specifically Mexican American gang members. According to O'Neil (1981b), men who hold back their emotions will use anger, aggressiveness, and violence to compensate for repressed feelings. According to Good, Robertson, Fitzgerald, Stevens, and Bartels (1996), researchers who have studied masculinity have shown that traditional beliefs in masculine gender role distress have increased, as have symptoms related to lower self-esteem and anxiety (Davis & Walsh, 1988, Sharpe & Heppner, 1991), chronic depression (Good & Mintz, 1990; Good & Wood, 1995; Sharpe & Heppner, 1991), and somatic complaints (Stillson, O'Neil, & Owen, 1991) by men who adhere to strict masculine gender roles.

### **Gender Role Conflict History**

O'Neil introduced the study of gender role conflict in 1981; at that time, limited information was available on men's gender role socialization. Gender role conflict surfaced from early gender role socialization and was blamed for sexism and disputes between both genders (O'Neil, 1981b). Good et al. (1996) posited that early socialization demanded young males to be powerful and competitive and not demonstrate any weaknesses in emotions. Young men learned to maintain control of themselves and

others through rationality and logic. The dominant Anglo culture demands that men achieve a social status and recognition that differentiates them from women.

O'Neil (1981b) contended that social and political unrest swept through the United States in the 1970s, increasing anger and conflict between men and women and resulting in gender role conflict and sexism. Men became aware of their own victimization and gender differences. Gender role reevaluation occurs when members of either gender recognize the need to evaluate, change, or delineate how they see and understand their world (O'Neil, 1981b). Members of both genders question how their attitudes and views as male, female, or androgynous affect or restrict emotional growth. The socialization of sexes drastically revolutionized the roles of both genders; as women demanded equality, men became aware of their own victimization and their potential to be fully human. Strict male attitudes of sexism, early gender role definitions, and societal expectations of masculine and feminine roles uphold the concept of male oppression. Male oppression is difficult for many men to comprehend due to some men's values deeply embedded in early socialization and laden with stereotypical beliefs of masculinity.

### **Rationale**

No current research was available on the relationship between violence and machismo in male Mexican American former gang members. Machismo has historically been negatively noted as dominant, aggressive, controlling, restrictive, womanizing (McKinney, Cateano, Ramisetty-Mikler, & Nelson, 2009), patriarchal, and oppressive toward women and children (J. B. Torres, 1998). J. B. Torres (1998) posited that the significance of masculinity changes between cultures, and the positive aspects of

machismo include bravery, strength, honor, self-respect, and the responsibility of protecting and being a provider. This study involved examining how the construct of machismo is magnified in the Mexican American gang culture through gender role conflict distress that is already in place due to the dominant culture expectations of male behavior. The study also involved investigating what it means to be a male Mexican American gang member profiled and identified culturally with machismo characteristics. The study includes a discussion on historical and cultural structures that maintain the traditional masculine ideology.

### **Instrumentation**

O'Neil (2008) noted the Gender Role Conflict Scale (GRCS) model assesses cognition and affective behaviors using 37 items that relate to masculine traits of men who adhere to strict masculine gender role scripts. The GRCS identifies the following patterns:

1. Restrictive emotionality.
2. Health care problems.
3. Obsession with achievement and success.
4. Restrictive sexual and affectionate behavior.
5. Homophobia.
6. Socialized control, power, and competition issues.

Pleck (1995) posited that gender role scripts include a series of characteristics and behaviors that men are socialized to adopt through early social learning and society's expectations. For example, some of these traits are traditional beliefs of power, success, and physical strength (Ruiz, 1981; Stevens, 1973; Valdes, Baron, & Ponce, 1987). These



men experienced psychological or health-related problems because of the devaluation of feminine values, beliefs, and attitudes. Several researchers O'Neil, (1982); David & Brannon, (1976); Goldberg, (1997); Levinson, Darrow, & Klein, (1978) indicated that the central focus to understanding men's health issues related to the men's avoidance of femininity. O'Neil theorized and established six patterns related to men's gender role socialization and fears of femininity, as mentioned above. The premise in social norm theory that an individual's false perceptions affect attitude, belief, and behavior determines how he or she sees and understands the world (Beck, 1976; Berkowitz, 2003; Ellis, 1977).

### **Research Questions**

The following three research questions comprised the basis for the study on restricted emotionality, machismo, and violence among Mexican American gang members:

1. What is the influence of cultural roots of patriarchy in the Mexican American male gangs.
2. What is the influence of restricted emotionality in a male gang population?
3. What is the influence of the dominant culture norms on Mexican American males?

### **Theoretical Concepts**

**Disidentification.** According to Hawkes and Taylor (1975), a number of Mexican American families still adhere to traditional patriarchal customs. The family system is built on hierarchal structure, with most of the power exercised by the father and the mother being subservient. Manhood and masculinity are modeled and inherited through

generational transmission and perpetuated in the next generation of dominant males. Sons are expected to follow the role of their father, which is to become a man and be fully masculine in thinking and attitude toward other men and women.

Greenson (1968) contended that for a young boy to develop a healthy perspective of masculinity, the young boy must dis-identify from his primary object of love (i.e., mother) and identify with his father. During a 9-year period, Greenson observed various cases (approximately two thirds to three fourths) in which the men wanted to be women. Although these men were concerned about not being identified as feminine, they seemed to have an unconscious degree of envy toward women, especially the mother.

Greenson (1968) contended that Kleinian theory endeavored to explain how the behavior of envy toward the mother begins early in life when the child observes his mother breastfeeding with joy and compassion. Greenson described a case of a 5.5-year-old who had not dis-identified from his mother and had a deepening desire to be a girl. Greenson described the child playing with a Barbie doll and pretending the Barbie was a princess with whom he was dancing. Clinical intervention helped the child change the perception of his identity as a male and individuate from his mother and identify with his father. Greenacre (1958) removed the ambiguity of various forms of gender identification. As a boy matures, he develops the capacity and understanding to distinguish the difference between self and others. He learns to model behavior from his mother; later, he modifies his behavior through observing his father and other men. His identity is a series of complex behaviors learned from both parents, teachers, peers, and environment that are integrated into his individual personality, beliefs, and values.

Greenson (p. 372) posited that gender identity does not occur at a definitive time, but three factors may trigger its onset.

1. Awareness of the anatomical and physiological structures in oneself according to Greenacre's (1958) work, primarily the face and the genitals.
2. The assignment to a specific gender, done by the parents and other important social figures in accordance with the overt sexual structures.
3. A biological force, which seems to be present at birth; for example, Greenson pointed out that some boys behave like little boys, despite the fact that they were born without a penis and have no visible testes.

Blazina and Watkins (2000) contended the disidentification process, prompted by the father, involves separating the son from his mother, thus providing the son a harsh introduction to dominant masculinity so the boy can become a man. However, the child is not ready to individuate from his mother's love and attention and may compensate for the loss through rigid adherence to a dominant ideology and expectations. Blazina and Watkins further contended that some young men may compensate for the loss of their mother's love and attention by joining street gangs. Gang membership provides a family atmosphere, safety, and brotherhood and gives an identity to an individual. Young boys may report feeling loved and accepted. As a gang member, young boys may feel empowered and protected from discrimination and the struggles against the oppression of the dominant culture. Lurigio, Flexon, and Greenleaf (2008) posited that some young boys learn masculine qualities of aggression, restraining emotional feelings, acting tough, and participating in deviant behavior. Some youths feel a coherent sense of self as they

gain the respect from their fellow gang members through acts of courage and allegiance that further establish an antithesis to cultural norms and behavior.

Blazina and Watkins (2000) noted that when a male conforms to the rigid beliefs and traditions of the dominant culture, the experience of gender role conflict may result in negative psychological and health issues. A male may overcome the disidentification process by submitting to aggression or violence or by falling into a state of depression. In many cases, fathers highly reward boys when they behave and play in a gender-congruent manner. Boys who like to play with girls' toys or demonstrate cross-gender behavior increase the probability of being treated like outcasts by their peers and society more than boys who adhere to gender congruency (McCreary, 1994).

**Masculine mystique.** O'Neil (1981b, p. 205) explained that the masculine mystique constitutes an intricate composition of values and beliefs that delineate how masculinity functions in society. The following assumptions are intrinsic to the masculine mystique:

- Men are biologically superior to women and thus are endorsed with far more potential than women.
- The male gender is far superior to women; therefore, it represents a higher gender value.
- It is important to express power, dominance, competition, and control to demonstrate one's masculinity.
- Feelings and emotions are indications of weaknesses assigned to women.
- Communication with the purpose of expressing emotions and feelings is considered feminine.

- It is best to think logically and rationally because it expresses superiority.
- Sex is the ultimate expression of superiority over women and should be expressed without affection or intimate behavior.
- Weakness should never be demonstrated to your male contemporary; otherwise, he may take advantage of you. Intimacy with men must be avoided; otherwise, it may be considered homosexuality.
- Success at a career determines a man's worth.
- The man is the breadwinner because he is superior to a woman in all abilities.
- A woman's place is at home raising children.

O'Neil (1981b) contended these values and beliefs are learned in early childhood development and socialization, which often results in an inflexible fixation of a system of beliefs that define what masculinity represents. These rigid beliefs vary in degrees from man to man, and not all men contribute to the denigration or the implication that femininity is inferior to masculinity. Consequently, rigid values are often integrated into the culture and are socialized as norms and beliefs that affect the male population in some way and produce a fear of femininity. O'Neil (1981b, p. 205) posited that the fear of femininity is the depreciation of feminine values manifested as (a) derogating all feminine values, attitudes, and behaviors and (b) upholding that women, men, and children who display feminine qualities are inferior, immature, and inappropriate. These fears are both consciously and unconsciously socialized into men. The fears can manifest as six characteristics of gender role conflict and strain (O'Neil, 1981b, p. 206):

1. Restricted emotionality: difficulty expressing one's feelings and difficulty giving up emotional control.

2. Socialized control, power, and competition issues: all behavior is controlled by the expectations of the dominant society. Dominant society expects a masculine male to demonstrate power and compete with integrity in all sports.
3. Homophobia: fear of anything related or construed to be homosexual; restricted sexual and affectionate behavior; attitude toward intimacy or affection is minimized; demonstrated to devalue or denigrate a woman.
4. Obsession with achievement and success: excessive fixation on winning or achieving a goal.
5. Health care problems: most men experience depression from conforming or not conforming to the dominant society's expectations.

**Defenses.** O'Neil et al. (1995) posited that gender role conflict influences four areas of integration in human development: cognitions, affective experiences, behaviors, and unconscious experiences. Cognitions are affected by the way an individual thinks about masculinity and femininity. Affective experiences are displayed through anger and aggression toward both genders. Behaviors are demonstrated through actions in both interpersonal and intrapersonal situations. Unconscious experiences are responses embedded in the psyche as learned behaviors. These behaviors are deep-seated, and men may remain unaware of them, but they may surface in response to an external object.

Mahalik et al. (1998) noted that men are acculturated through socialization experiences and develop defenses to counteract the effects of vulnerability or caring that may relate to the nature of feminism. Men learn early in life to disconnect from caring relationships, including those with their mother, and to be autonomous (Mahalik et al., 1998). Brooks (1990) contended males are indoctrinated and socialized in the basic

training beliefs of violence and misogynistic thinking. Brooks noted Lifton's work on intimate connections to the ubiquitous violence and denigration of women as sex objects is similar to what is present in warfare regarding the development of the defense mechanism of emotional suppression described by Lifton as *psychic numbing*. Brooks described psychic numbing as the depersonalization of the enemy, where a soldier feels minimal or no emotions, feelings, or empathy for others. Shatan described the depersonalization of the enemy as a method of avoiding and anesthetizing feelings of empathy or compassion for any hostile group of people or opposing force (Brooks, 1990).

Mahalik, Locke, Gottfried, Scott, and Freitas (2003) added that masculine norms are learned behaviors from early childhood. Boys are taught not to wear certain colors that would identify them as girls. Males are taught to hold back their pain and hurt because *big boys don't cry*. These learned behaviors are reinforced through the media that depict strong and tough men who fight back with violence. Boys learn that sports are games of violence; therefore, violent acts are permissible and endorsed against an opponent for the victory of the team.

Mahalik et al. (1998, 2003) noted research on defense mechanisms (Vaillant, 1992) elaborated how defense mechanisms appear as a continuum in human development, ranging from immature defenses, to intermediate neurotic defenses, to mature defenses. For example, immature defenses such as anger, poor behavioral control, or projection exist in children, adolescents, and those with mental disorders. Neurotic defenses are considered normal and healthy and are usually found in individuals managing how to handle acute distress by changing how they feel about something. These defenses may present themselves as repression, displacement, reaction formation,

and intellectualization. Mature defenses are commonly seen in mentally healthy people. Individuals may use altruism and suppression to integrate personal feelings. Mature defenses result in balancing both work and a meaningful intimate relationship. Mahalik et al. (1998, p. 249) described another study conducted by Ihilevich and Gleser in 1993 on defensive styles using the Defense Mechanism Inventory to analyze five defenses:

1. Turning against object: working through the conflict by assaulting a real or imagined external object.
2. Projection: invidious or antagonistic remarks are ascribed to an external object.
3. Principalization: emotions, feelings, or thinking are split off from the present situation, thereby reducing former feelings through repression.
4. Turning against self: the individual attempts to negotiate a conflict by turning ill feelings and thinking against self.
5. Reversal: an individual responds to conflict with positive or neutral effect to a belligerent situation or object.

Reversal appears to be the most effective adaptation in controlling or decreasing the effect of a situation or object. Accordingly, Ihilevich and Gleser (1993) demonstrated that principalization was the best response for changing and adjusting a current situation. Turning against object is considered a second choice after principalization in the level of adaptation. The degree of hostility or aggression must be moderate to accommodate effective change. Turning against self, the most volatile level, has a higher risk of depression, masochism, and suicidal ideation.



In conclusion, Mahalik et al. (1998) indicated the Defense Mechanism Inventory was successful in distinguishing gender differences in externalizing (i.e., turning anger against object) and internalizing (i.e., turning anger against self). Men were found to be significantly more likely than women to respond by externalizing their feelings and thoughts through projecting toward an object (Bogo, Winget, & Gleser, 1970; Cramer, 1983; Gleser & Ihilevich, 1993). The Defense Mechanism Inventory showed that women scored higher in their internalization of feelings, which resulted in blaming themselves (Bogo et al., 1970; Gleser & Ihilevich, 1993; Massong, Dickson, Ritzler, & Layne, 1982). The differential found in thoughts and projections of males and females illustrates how gender is associated with variations in psychological defenses.

According to Mahalik et al. (1998), previous psychoanalytical findings failed to explain the psychological defenses that underlie gender role socialization. Mahalik et al. noted that the gender role strain paradigm developed by Pleck (1981, 1995) provided a concise theory based on sociological and psychological variants. These theoretical perspectives help to understand the development of psychological defenses in men.

**Social constructionism.** Pleck's (1995) paradigm of social constructionism and three theories of gender role strain replaced the construct of gender role identity. Pleck contended that a significant number of males were exhibiting negative behaviors as a consequence of adhering to strong cultural standards and socialization. Attempts to maintain these cultural standards often led males to experience extensive distress and low self-esteem due to a failure to achieve male role expectations. Pleck's three theories of gender role strain are (a) "gender role discrepancy or incongruity is resultant to the disparity between expectations and individual male characteristics" (p. 14); (b) "gender

role trauma examines the probability of success in maintaining male role expectations, the socialization process to achieve the desired outcome was traumatic, or the desired outcome itself was traumatic with prolonged negative consequences” (p. 14); or (c) “gender role dysfunction” (p. 14) that argues men who meet the demands of societal expectations forsake family closeness in exchange for material success and often develop dysfunctional family relationships as a result.

Pleck (1995) and West and Zimmerman (1987) noted that social constructionism takes into consideration how different cultures evolve in how they “do gender” (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 126). According to social constructionism, a gender role is a dynamic process affected by determinants of cultural constructs in how a particular culture honors and emphasizes the form of masculinity. Pleck stated that social constructionism and gender role strain seem to both agree with the same theory. The social constructionism model of learning gender scripts is equivalent to the gender role strain paradigms. In other words, gender role socialization affects both constructs. Social constructionism indicates that masculinity can have unfavorable outcomes for men. According to Pleck (1995), “The gender role strain model for masculinity is in the broad sense a social constructionist perspective that simply predated social constructionism” (p. 22).

Pleck (1995) posited that men are not a secondary product or unexpected consequence of biology but are social constructions that evolve from the expectations of their social environment (peers, teachers, parents, and media) that typically defines masculinity. Boys are socialized into what is acceptable as masculine behavior and with minimal or no emotional affect. Pleck proposed that gender roles are confounding and

conflicting. Men who follow the gender role norms often fail and are ostracized and severely condemned.

The gender role paradigm takes into consideration the socialization role that serves as an impetus for men to posture the expected masculinity within their social group. Consequently, the traditional male is expected to endorse societal values of masculinity; the normative behaviors of masculinity are reinforced through shame and isolation. Thus, a male mobilizes his fear through suppression, concealing emotions, and physical vulnerability. Rigid social models of masculinity that are successfully implemented result in the development of *traumatic abrogation*, which triggers early memories of childhood separation from the nurturing arms of mother to the emotionally constrained father (Krugman, 1995; Pleck, 1995; Pollock, 1992). Levant (1995) noted that to reconstruct masculinity, both men and women must acknowledge the male socialization process.

Pleck (1995) posited that the notion of trauma is involved in acknowledging and describing masculinity. Pleck described Levant's work of integration that included social learning and psychoanalytical developmental processes to define and explain masculinity traumas that shape the socialization of an individual. Brooks (1990) expounded that young boys or men conditioned to survive in a *barrio*, which is a neighborhood infested with crime and death, experience trauma similar to those with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) who survive in a war-torn environment. Prolonged exposure to destructive sociocultural circumstances (i.e., war or high-crime areas) has negative effects on men's ability to progress beyond what they have accepted through cultural socialization (Brooks, 1990). These young men are therefore not able to mobilize their

feelings or exchange their inherent survival mode for a harmonious and higher quality of life (Brooks, 1990).

The male socialization process embraces the skills of men to protect and provide, to solve problems, and to maintain composure under all circumstances. Men need to have opportunities to learn emotional empathy, emotional self-awareness, and emotional expressivity so their expression of anger or sex may be appropriately released and contained in empathy. Consequently, they may feel open to experience feelings and have closure with the loss of their mother, their absent father, and feelings of shame about not being man enough.

### **Victimization**

According to O'Neil (1981a) and Pleck (1976), a new condition developed as men recognized their own victimization and oppressive sexism. The acceptance of restrictive gender roles in men resulted in feeling vulnerable and deficient in intimacy. The self-imposed scripts of restrictive gender roles play further into the constriction of defined societal masculinity by magnifying the differential between violent and nonviolent men. Life experiences are socialized and negotiated into the construct of machismo through a script of theories and macho personality (Zaitchik & Mosher, 1993). Male children learn through early socialization that "anger, excitement, fear, disgust, and contempt" (Mosher & Tomkins, 1988, p. 68) are acceptable behaviors in being a "superior masculine" (Mosher & Tomkins, 1988, p. 68) person.

Zaitchik and Mosher (1993) noted that women and effeminate men are considered conquered objects, and dominance over these groups is acceptable as an inherited virtue of being male. Zaitchik and Mosher posited that the warrior mentality or macho

personality is obtrusively violent and intimidating to both men and women, with a proclivity toward criminal and aggressive sexual behavior. The constellation of the macho personality is developed through punitive socialization. This amplified and exaggerated ideology of the macho male is predictably maladaptive, which leads to both legal and marital problems (Mosher & Tomkins, 1988; Schwartz, Buboltz, Seemann, & Flye, 2004).

Holtzworth-Munroe and Hutchinson (1993) found violent men demonstrated a significant need for attachment or dependency as children and young adolescents. These men presented a higher propensity toward developing personality disorders. The usual cognitive process of violent men is to project blame on others or on alcohol and substance abuse. Weldon and Gilchrist (2012) contended that Holtzworth and Hutchinson failed to evaluate the effect of cognitive arousal in their research of violent and nonviolent men. Eckhardt and Dye (2000) contended that knowing how violent and nonviolent men perceive information is essential in understanding how these differences influence gender role behavior.

### **Gender Role Expectations**

Mahalik et al. (1998) described the causes of gender role expectations. They demonstrated the development of restrictive emotionality through social construction that may lead to serious defense mechanisms: (a) socioculture, which is usually the dominant culture, has a significant impact in changing a man's behavior; (b) the dominant culture communicates its norms and expectations through modeling and direct communication early in a boy's life; (c) a group or an individual in society (i.e., same socioeconomic status, sex, gender, and racial ethnicity) influences and may interpret how the young boy

sees or understands the norms of a dominant culture; and (d) depending on the individual, acceptance or rejection of societal norms will determine how he will negotiate the level of his conformity or nonconformity.

Mahalik et al. (1998) contended the development of gender roles for men occurs through social construction and not biological construction, as once thought. The social construction of masculinity develops through norms, values, and mores learned early in life through interpersonal interactions with parents, teachers, and peers. Levant et al. (1992, p. 380) proposed that the standard criteria of masculinity include seven points: avoiding femininity, restrictive emotionality, seeking achievement and status, self-reliance, aggression, homophobia, and nonrelational attitudes toward sexuality.

Pleck (1981) contended that these socialized values and beliefs typify and stereotype men into believing the unsuccessful accomplishment of gender role identity would result in homosexuality. O'Neil (1981a) noted that men's gender role conflicts emerge from rigid gender role socialization and sexism. These traditional beliefs and values of the masculine mystique result in sexism and the violation of both genders through the minimization and the patronization of women. Millett (2005) contended that rigid gender socialization and sexism are the ideology of a patriarchy that enforces male superiority and a negative psychological effect on the well-being of both genders. O'Neil (1981b) posited that traditional beliefs of masculinity impede men's potential to experience the positive affect and tender qualities needed to maintain relationships to overcome the root of their pain. Millett (2005) contended that as long as women allow feminine gender denigration by the patriarchal culture or media, men would discriminate against the female gender and see them as inferior citizens.

## Summary

Bergman (1995) posited that men are conditioned through societal norms and expectations to be powerful, fearless, successful, and breadwinners and not to express their feelings. Physical strength, cultural leadership, and financial success are common territory for men. The expression of feelings and the relational phenomenon is found in the aptitude of femininity. Thus, men are taught from their fathers or other males in early childhood to disconnect from their mother by seeking other men to instruct them into the role of masculinity. Pollock (1995) argued that men have learned through society to suppress their feelings, avoid vulnerability, and posture a stoic unresponsiveness. The question is whether men can overcome the suppression of childhood loss from an early separation from their mother to lessen their emotional indifference as demonstrated through traditional masculinity, personal strain, difficulties in interpersonal relationships, and restricted affection that form the patterns of gender role conflict. Therefore, the loss of the relational bond and the indefinable pain of early separation results in an unrealized need for closeness with a fear of experiencing the repressed trauma again (Pollock, 1995). To understand the relationship between gender role conflict and violence, it is essential to examine racial and ethnic backgrounds, cultural values, norms, individual beliefs, and the learned attitudes that provide the setting of masculine ideology in the context of the culture (O'Neil, Good, & Holmes, 1992). According to West and Zimmerman (1987), the structure of gender cannot be explicated as a biological sequence of feminine or masculine genes and traits. Human beings learn cultural behaviors and beliefs early in life that endorse specific ideologies of masculinity and femininity rooted within the cultural structure.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **Attachment Theory**

The following chapter explores the sociobiological systems that predispose a male child into the unconscious acceptance of male socialization. The research continues with the process of gender role socialization as an implicit and explicit standard of measurement that society implements in defining masculinity and feminine behavior (Mahalik et al., 1998). The study further explores the etiology of criminal behavior as a dimension of gender role conflict specifically related to Mexican American masculinity. The study explains the attributes of patriarchy and the ways it affects both genders, creating a masculinity ideology. The concepts of guilt and shame are explored as a possible strong emotion associated with poor decisions and depression. The concept of attachment is explored to delineate possible sociopsychological pathways that influence a young boy's social competence into masculinity.

Holmes (2001) noted that Bowlby proposed human socialization and attachment begins in early child development, and a healthy relationship is dependent on the interaction between a boy and his primary caregiver, usually his mother. Later, the adolescent male learns to mitigate between systems of belief and behavior in his family and the expectations of a dominant society: tough, strong, athletic, and successful. Watts and Borders (2005) noted that male adolescents are at a higher risk than are females for problems at school with social interactions and emotional issues, which results in a higher percentage of adolescent males diagnosed with depression, suicidal ideation, exhibiting assaultive behavior, or being killed in the commission of a violent crime. Watts and Borders speculated gender role conflict occurs during the life span of a male. Ainsworth



et al., (1978) identified three patterns of systematic relationships: The first, the secure pattern where the child's interaction in the presence of the mother or caregiver is with reassurance and confidence. When the child needs reassurance, it seeks comfort with the mother or caregiver. In this type of relationship, the caregiver is sensitive and responsive to the child's needs. The second, the pattern of interaction is an anxious/resistant pattern. In this relationship, the child feels anxious and unwilling to investigate the environment it shows excessive vigilance of its caregiver. In this situation, the infant may demonstrate undue stress and anxiety of separation and not easily comforted by the caregiver upon her return. The parent or caregiver usually described as inconsistent in her response to the child. The third, pattern of interaction is anxious/avoidant attachment, the child in this pattern reacts to distress by avoiding contact or closeness with the caregiver, although the caregiver attempts to comfort the child. In this pattern, the interaction of the caregiver is noted as unresponsive, unemotional, and rejecting of the child.

These types of relational interactions are believed to occur in the life span of the individual. Other researchers have noted that the infant develops a neurological imprint of relationships and expectations. The individual learns attitudes and the role of the person in the context of the relationship including the manner in which displayed emotions or feelings are shared between family members (Sroufe and Fleeson, 1986). Consequently, patterns of internal distortions are reinforced and maintained over time through behaviors and relationships.

### **Early Childhood Socialization**

According to Blazina (2001), a number of researchers have shown gender role conflict results in psychological maladjustment in men; other researchers as Fischer and

Good (1997) indicated gender role conflict is related to poor parental attachment, specifically among children growing up in poverty who lack good parental support and have poor attachment to both parents. According to Blazina and Watkins (1996), Cournoyer and Mahalik (1995), Fischer and Good (1997), Good and Mintz (1990), Good et al. (1995), and Sharpe and Heppner (1991), young boys often display moderate to severe problems in school and life outside of school. Young boys also face insurmountable developmental difficulties through the process of separation and individuation. The experience of becoming a man is not associated with a positive identification with the father but rather is associated with the denial of a nurturing and loving caregiver (i.e., the mother; Blazina, 1997).

Blazina (1997) posited that young boys are prompted to break free from the emotional bond and attention they have received from their mother and to block any aspect of vulnerability. Blazina contended that a boy's failure to achieve complete autonomy and to repudiate all emotional attachments and feminine qualities of his mother is met by disapproval and disdain from his father. The young boy has failed to be a man and turns his anger toward himself (Solt, 1996).

Benjamin (1998) posited that young boys might see their mother as a seductive peril to their autonomy. The process of disidentification abolishes the relationship between the mother and son, including all "emotional connection and vulnerability" (Blazina 1997, p. 61) to form positive and healthy relationships. Mosher and Sirkin (1984) asserted that young boys are exposed to humiliation and scorn as methods to socialize them into manhood and often develop hypermasculinity, shame, and contempt.

Further, researchers have shown that boys are severely reprimanded and unjustifiably punished for not following societal norms or not adhering to gender role expectations (McCreary, 1994). Consequently, the fear of being characterized as effeminate is a prevailing artifact in Western psychology that may affect the genesis of self-development in young boys and their ability to express emotions (Blazina, 1997).

### **Adolescent Boys and Gender Role Conflict**

Addelston, as well as Reichert and Kurlioff (as cited in Watts & Borders, 2005, p. 268), found that adolescent boys who have higher scores in gender role conflict demonstrate lower self-regard and have more conventional sexist attitudes toward women than do boys with lower gender role conflict scores. A gender role conflict study conducted by Reichert and Kurlioff revealed a correlation between “anxiety, poor academics and self-concept” (as cited in Watts & Borders, 2005, p. 268). Blazina, Pisecco, and O’Neil (2005) used a modified version of the GRCS for adolescents. In a sample of 339 high-school-aged boys, Blazina et al. concluded that adolescent males experienced psychological tension in areas of family relationships, as well as emotional and conduct difficulties.

Blazina et al.’s (2005) findings on restrictive emotionality demonstrated that adolescent males felt uncomfortable expressing or displaying affection to another male that would make them appear unmanly or feminine. The study revealed underlying adolescent homophobia as a reason for the discretion and willingness to repress emotions or feelings of affection. Blazina et al. indicated that these boys preferred to display anger or rage rather than demonstrate any type of grief. Some of the boys indicated that they did not display emotions because they lacked compassionate feelings. Blazina et al.

indicated that adolescent males described their fathers as being excessively strict and instructing their boys not to cry or express feelings of pain or disappointment. Blazina et al. contended that individuals in Western society view fondness for or responding with sensitivity to another man as a strong denotation of homosexuality.

### **Male Socialization**

During World War II, women worked in jobs normally held by men. Sheehan (2010) pointed out the work of historian James Gilbert in which Gilbert found that the established norms and assumptions of breadwinner masculinity (i.e., primarily the working class) drastically changed during the postwar era. Women demanded that men spend more money on household purchases and take on more responsibilities with the family. Pleck (1976) and Sheehan (2010) posited that the traditional male masculinity structure (i.e., patriarchal authority) differentiated into a fluid gender role where the focus of masculinity was on developing friendships and intimacy with women.

Pleck (1976) noted that some conservative cultures maintain orthodox values and beliefs of traditional males. These same traits are also illustrated in the modern male character with a lesser effect. Blazina and Watkins (1996), Cournoyer and Mahalik (1995), and Good et al. (1996) contended that male emotional socialization encourages the devaluation of feelings that denote vulnerability or a resemblance to femininity to define masculine traits of courage, stoicism, bravery, power, and dominance. Consequently, repression of emotional expression and feelings in men is often linked to low self-esteem, higher anxiety, minimal social intimacy, higher sexual aggression, depression, and restricted emotionality.

Millett (2005) posited that the study of gender was initially intended to outline sexual politics, which referred to the subordination of women by patriarchal powers. The rationale behind the study of gender was to develop a complementary framework of equal sexes. The word *politics* refers to the hierarchal structure of relationships where one set of individuals is constrained or dominated by another (Millett, 2005). Carlson and Knoester (2011) posited that male gender socialization occurs through role model identification when a young male learns about values, attitudes, and beliefs through family structure and the dominant culture. Feminist theorists were the first to respond against rigid male gender roles that affected the relationship of both men and women in how couples related and communicated intimately (Brooks, 1990).

Brooks (1990) noted Farrell wrote the *Ten Commandments of Masculinity* in 1974, which focused on not demonstrating any emotional weaknesses, denigrating women, holding dominance over women through sex, achieving stronger masculinity through a successful work career, advocating patriarchal dominance at home, and keeping a strict demarcation of gender roles. Several decades later, Farrell wrote about reverse sexism, which stereotyped men as being used by women as success objects. Farrell indicated women endorsed the societal gender scripts and expectations socialized into the cultural beliefs that men are the providers and women are to expect and enjoy the benefits of their labor. Thus, the continuation of male ideology derives from socialized attitudes and beliefs that promote and divide structural relationships between the two sexes (Pleck, 1995).

The construct of gender role conflict promotes rigid male socialization that negatively influences men by limiting how men express emotions and feelings.

Cournoyer and Mahalik (1995) posited that men are experiencing an evolution of change and are willing to express tenderness and empathy. Cournoyer and Mahalik referred to the work of Neugarten, who indicated that men in their later years begin to turn inward and become more introspective. The result of this change allowed men to recognize their own victimization and endorsement of masculinity ideals (tough, aggressive, successful, and avoidance of feelings and feminine qualities) through societal expectations that are difficult or impossible to keep. These ideals often required men to be strong, athletic, brave, the protector, and authoritative and not to express any qualities of emotions that could be labeled as feminine. The consequence of men adhering to masculinity ideals and societal expectations to restrict their emotions and feelings is their own self-victimization of depression, higher anxiety, lower self-esteem, and lower capacity for closeness.

### **Socialization Code**

*Gender straitjacketing*, a term coined by Pollack (1998, 2000), described the ubiquitous male-based socialization code that introduces and enforces a young male child to be strong, be aggressive, and behave like a boy and not like a girl. The purpose is to stigmatize and condemn any behavior that may be construed as effeminate. Enforcement of the socialization code is to shame and denigrate a young boy's emotions and feelings and replace those feelings with new constructs of toughness and aggression. School-age boys who demonstrate sensitivity and affection may be ridiculed or judged as being like girls and seen as feminine because they have not adopted the paradigm of male socialization. Pollack (2006) contended that these boys feel disgraced for displaying their true feelings and emotions.

### **Society Expectations**

Blazina (1997) contended that society's objective is to hold each man accountable to its standards and expectations through the socialization of masculine goals pertaining to success, power, and restricted emotionality. Blazina and Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, and Mckee (1978) posited that adherence to traditional masculine goals and living in vigilance of not being identified with feminine traits or characteristics has caused men to fear anything remotely feminine. Blazina described the nature of the feminine in Western society as various states of emotional reactivity of feeling or appearing defenseless. As a result, some men experience maladaptive psychological affects and may continue to repress any feminine parts or feelings in their psyche (Blazina, 1997).

### **Contemporary Socialization**

Contemporary socialization is detrimental to boys' physical state and mental disposition. A lack of contemporary socialization can lead to a surge of academic failure, depression, suicide, self-imposed alienation, and extreme violence (Levant, 2001; Poe, 2004; Pollack, 1998, 1999, 2006). Pollack (2006) contended that research consistently portrayed boys and men as being incognizant, being emotionally empty, and exhibiting assaultive behavior. The implications of being a masculine man in society cause young men to feel confused and unsupported in what direction to follow. Pollack (2006) contended that the more confusion and despair boys feel about manhood, the more they conceal their vulnerabilities to avoid appearing weak or being disapproved of by other males.

Pollack (1999) suggested that empathy is the vehicle to reaching into the mask of masculinity. To teach young men to be empathic and compassionate, members of society must also be more understanding and compassionate toward them. Evidence in masculine research has shown that boys and men express great concern and grief over relationships (Levant, 2001; Pollack, 1998, 1999, 2000).

### **Disidentification**

Young men who experience premature disidentification as children have difficulty connecting with the feminine gender due to triggers of abandonment and depression experienced in early childhood (Blazina & Watkins, 2000; Pollack, 2006). Developmental trauma occurs because of the loss of both maternal and paternal bonds (Betcher & Pollack, 1993; Pollack 1995). In a phenomenon he called “relational dread” (p. 80), Bergman (1995) contended that detrimental emotional trauma hinders the development of a man and his connection with others in relationships. Bergman posited the breaking of the early relationship between a male child and his mother to master masculinity and gain independence leads into the disidentification process that constrains all feelings. Thus, young men experience stagnation during emotional development, which results in the loss of all internalized aspects of the relational bond between mother and son (Blazina & Watkins, 2000). The theory of gender role conflict is unprecedentedly related to the relationship issues of men that embrace the full aspects of traditional masculinity and aggressive behaviors (Blazina & Watkins, 2000).

### **Aggression and Violence**

Bandura’s (1978) social learning theory explains that aggression is acquired and developed by the following social variants: (a) family (domestic violence, physical abuse,



or severe and unjustifiable corporal punishment), (b) subcultural determinants (the neighborhood or community is criminally influenced and its nature is retaliatory), and (c) symbolic influences (advertisements through the media, magazines, video games, movies, and rap music endorses male aggression and violence). According to Amato (2012), the U.S. Department of Justice reported that men commit an overwhelming number of crimes. According to the U.S. Department of Justice (2013), violent crimes increased from 22.6% of rapes or sexual assaults per 1,000 persons age 12 or older in 2011 to 26.1% per 1,000 persons in 2012. Serious domestic violence increased from 1.4 in 2011 to 1.6 in 2012.

O'Neil (1990) proposed that men who adhere to gender role conflict may be in jeopardy of developing maladaptive behaviors projected toward their children and families. These men display addictive behaviors in areas of work, power, control, sexual harassment, and violence. Mahalik et al. (2003) investigated the relationship between social norms, gender role norms, and masculine norms and how they affect male development and behavior. Mahalik et al. concluded that subculture groups or the dominant society influence a man's behavior and thinking both at home and at work. Failure to conform is then met with serious sanctions. Mahalik et al. described the constructs of nonconformity and conformity in conjunction with masculine norms as follows:

Thus, conformity to masculine norms is defined as meeting societal expectations for what constitutes masculinity in one's public or private life. Conversely, non-conformity to masculine norms is defined as not meeting societal expectation of what constitutes masculinity in one's public and private life. (p. 3)

According to Jakupcak (2003) men have been depicted in traditional masculinity as being unresponsive to feelings and emotions and expected to use anger or violence when confronted with other men or women. Historically, men have been programmed by societal expectations that expressing vulnerable emotion is criticized and viewed as feminine. O'Neil and Harway (1997) contended that men use anger or aggression to dismiss vulnerable feelings and regain their sense of masculinity. Jakupcak pointed out in Bowker's, Miedzian's, and O'Toole and Schiffman's studies of masculine gender socialization that masculinity may be the precursor to violence instigated by situational demands that violate masculine cultural gender roles. For example, Jakupcak noted that some men's feelings of anger and retaliation are emotionally incited in a sports competition, and those emotions are later displaced as aggression and violence toward women. Franchina, Eisler, and Moore (2001) contended that men with high gender role conflict have a higher propensity and disposition to use violence toward their female dating partners. Eisler, Franchina, Moore, Honeycutt and Rattigan (2000) and Franchina et al. (2001) contended that acts of violence may serve as an emotional regulator to eliminate the feelings or emotions that make these men feel vulnerable. Social learning theory stipulates that boys and men learn through gender socialization. The adherent negative reinforcements from societal expectations and parents limit young boys from expressing their inner feelings in fear of being ridiculed (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). Jakupcak (2003) posited that men's fear of vulnerable emotions such as sadness, anxiety, or positive emotions (i.e., love and affection) may result in them using aggression or emotional avoidance to counter any effects of vulnerability. Consequently, aggression

that succeeds in ending affective reactions may reinforce violence by removing anxiety and sadness and reinforcing the same behavior.

### **Criminal Behavior**

Gordon, Jurkovic, and Arbuthnot (1998) contended that the etiology of criminal behavior is shaped through childhood aggression by values and norms of social cultural groups. O'Neil (1982) revealed that gender role conflict has a strong and significant relationship to violence. The gender role conflict scales developed by O'Neil in the 1980s were designed to measure conflict affectively, behaviorally, cognitively, and unconsciously (O'Neil, 1982). The scales contain several items that focus only on behavioral problems. Therefore, O'Neil surmised that the behavioral dimension of the GCRS makes it unique as a measurement of masculinity traits. Gender role conflict is an outward expression of negative emotions that can cause physical or emotional injury to another (Amato, 2012). The construct of violence is highly associated with gender role conflict in men who act out aggression or violence (Amato, 2012).

### **The History of Hispanic Gangs**

Mexican American gang members are particularly masculine in their identity and behavior and are known to exhibit violence. Gender role conflict "is a psychological state in which socialized gender roles have negative consequences on the person or others. Gender role conflict occurs when rigid or restrictive gender roles result in personal restriction, devaluation, or violation of others or self" (O'Neil, 1981a, p. 203). Gender role scripts are learned very early in life. The scripts are internalized from early to very late adulthood. Ultimately, gender role conflict affects cognitive, emotional,

unconscious, or behavioral problems influenced by learned behaviors and expectations of the dominant culture, institutions, groups, and patriarchal society (O'Neil et al., 1995).

Valdez (2009) identified four levels of gang infrastructure that operate as an organized entity of gang indoctrination. The first level includes several structures of gang involvement, beginning with young children ages 8 to 11 years old who often become the foot soldiers of the gang organization (Valdez, 2009). The second level is the turning point for most adolescents and involves association and participation in gang activities. Although not yet fully initiated as gang members, they may confirm association or deny it to parents and authority. The third level occurs when the males become combative and territorial gang members dedicated and respected for protecting the neighborhood against rebel gangs. The fourth level is seen among the more notorious and flagitious gang members who have a history of incarcerations for grievous crimes. At this level, the members are often described as original gangsters. They are the godfathers of the gang organization, highly respected and admired by the younger members. Promotion to an original gangsters status is not exclusive to older members but achieved through recurrent acts of violence and obedience for the sake of the organization (Valdez, 2009).

Gangs date back to the 16th century, when Spanish and Mexican settlers occupied the American West. In 1848, following the Mexican American war, Mexico abdicated territory in the region now known as California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and half of Colorado. Mexicans living in these regions became naturalized citizens (Valdez, 2009). These naturalized citizens began to feel ostracized and rejected by Anglo-Saxons. Due to their new status as citizens, they were not accepted back in

Mexico. Half a century later, Mexican immigrants came to United States to look for work and to escape the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1920 (Vigil, 1988). The new immigrants consisted of low-skill, low-wage laborers who lived in inferior neighborhoods and were viewed as disenfranchised people. They moved into rundown sections in the zones of transition near business districts (Bursik, 2000; Valdez, 2009; Vigil, 1988). As these immigrants gained greater assimilation and wealth, they progressively moved into better neighborhoods or towns (Bursik, 2000). Immigrants who remained in impoverished neighborhoods gave rise to Mexican gangs who conducted illicit activities.

Some Mexican immigrants who had difficulty adjusting to life in the United States formed Cholo gangs (similar to their country of origin) and performed illegal activities to survive on the fringes of a poor economy. According to Vigil (1990), the structure of early gangs became more violent after the Great Depression, and Mexicans were repatriated and deported to Mexico. Families were deported and left without any means to provide for their children. Discrimination and racism were rampant during the 1940s, and Mexicans challenged social authority with antisocial behavior and by entering public places forbidden to Mexicans. The name *Cholo* was used to describe marginalized people caught between two cultures (Mexican immigrant and Mexican American). The media depicted the Cholo gangs as operating in mayhem and terror, without any moral delineation. Vigil (1990) posited that the zoot suit riots further alienated and intensified the feelings of discrimination toward Mexicans by Anglo-Saxons in 1943, when a group of servicemen and Anglos ambushed and assaulted a group of Mexican youths dressed in zoot suits. During this time, the tension of war was high and civil turmoil over equal

rights for Mexicans was broadcast by public radio and not condoned by the police. The public media singled a group of Mexican Americans and referred to them as *pachucos*, which is a derogatory term meaning gang member or punk. Pachucos wore a particular style of dress called zoot suits that defined them as gang members and violators of law and peace. Vigil noted that in 1981, Alfredo Gonzales remarked that the period of gang members began during the zoot suit riots in 1943 that forced youths to join gangs and work collaboratively against the dominant society.

Vigil and Long (1990) noted the gang with the most longevity and largest geographical expansion was the Chicanos of Southern California. Chicanos originated from the influx of immigrants over approximately half a century. The Chicanos were subjected to the same hardships immigrants experienced with poverty, discrimination, unemployment, and poor neighborhoods. The new generation of gangs, which included the Chicanos, perpetuated the same criminal activity and lived in the same bad environments. The Chicanos wore the emblem of the Cholo, the raised fist, as a badge of honor and an identification of a new autonomy and race. The new identification severed the conceptualized pattern of the traditional Mexican American or any link to the Anglo-Saxon social culture (Vigil & Long, 1990). Decker & Van Winkle, (1996) noted that Moore (1978) defined three exemplary features of the Chicano gangs: (a) they are territorially based; (b) they have a strong affiliation to their cohort; and (c) fighting is the focal point, followed by substance use and selling drugs. A gang's formation begins with the premise of friendship and hanging out in the same neighborhood; gangs claim territory to protect one another and their neighborhood (Decker et., al 1996).

Characteristics of gangs have changed since the 1950s due to an increase in aggression, violence, and worldwide enterprises in criminal activities (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996). Street gangs are mostly found in areas suffering from economic deprivation, unemployment, systematic discrimination, poor housing, and inequality. The gangs represent the social and economic characteristics of the communities in which the young people reside (Grund & Densley, 2012).

Gangs have grown in magnitude and power. Gangs can no longer be conceived as delinquent adolescents confined to a barrio or neighborhood (Egley & Howell, 2013). The number of gangs in the United States is climbing to epidemic levels. In 2013, there were more than 33,000 different gangs, compared to the 2010 census of 29,000 gangs (Egley & Howell, 2013). The number of current gang members in United States is 782,500, compared to 756,000 in 2010. Gangs have evolved into powerful illicit organizations controlling trafficking in humans, drugs, and other commodities such as stolen vehicles and weapons (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2011).

Hagedorn (2007) explained that gangs are establishments of the socially rejected. They begin as a group of boys hanging out without any parental supervision and control. They are incorporated into a structure of poverty in barrios, ghettos, and prisons. Some of them evolve to participate in sophisticated forms of crimes and illicit businesses. Gang organizations have strong associations with political, cultural, religious, and military institutions.

### **Disidentification and Gender Role Conflict**

Researchers have conducted a considerable amount of theory and research on the concepts of individuation and autonomy and have noted the importance of developing a

normal psychological separation or individuation from one's primary caregivers to develop as a male and be identified as masculine. Conventional psychoanalysis theory proposes that the development of identity within a man occurs involves a young boy disowning his emotional attachments to his mother or primary caregiver (Blazina, 2004). Then the boy forms an alliance and identifies with his father or a male role model to enhance emotional autonomy and masculinity (Blazina, 2004), which results in disidentifying from a relational stance that may identify him as feminine (Bergman, 1995). The effect of the disidentification process indicates that men are left with emotional wounds and with weakness of the masculine self. Reparation of the masculine self is then metabolized through reinforcing psychological defenses either by avoiding others (reminder of the residual) or by moving toward others in the hope of finding oneself learning to navigate the emotional residual of disidentification. The traditional theory of disidentification is a denial of one's primary caregiver (usually the mother) and all internalized memories and emotional aspects of being lovingly cared for by one's mother (Blazina, 2004). Men are expected to be disengaged from all that is feminine and fully embrace all traditional attributes of masculinity (Blazina, 2004).

Blazina (2004) proposed two changes in disidentification: (a) reinterpret the psychological and social perceptions that favor and reinforce unhealthy, restrictive gender roles for boys and (b) refocus on how gender role conflict and attributes of the disidentification result in cognitive disengagement and emotional restriction in adult men. Blazina and Watkins (2000) and Bergman (1995) noted that gender role socialization leads to a failure to perceive, understand, and be in the process of a relationship. Prompted by the father and culture, a little boy learns to disconnect from the nurturing of



a woman (usually the mother) to achieve maleness. The process of disconnection involves “disconnecting from the very process of growth in a relationship, a learning of turning away from the whole relational mode” (Bergman 1995, p. 76). The vicious cycle leads to a fragile masculine self as a man disconnects from others and isolates his emotions and mutual responsiveness to achieve competence in the world (Bergman, 1995; Blazina & Watkins 2000).

### **Masculine Ideology**

Masculine ideology consists of prescribed attitudes and beliefs introduced through gender role socialization. Children early in life are ascribed specific values and norms about their gender (Liang, Salcedo, & Miller, 2011). These norms and cultural beliefs are reinforced and communicated through family members, media, and society (Liang et al. 2011; Norwalk, Vandiver, White, & Carlson, 2011). Stereotypical ideologies are endorsed through hegemonic constructs imposed by descriptors of physical strength, success, power, competition, aggression, and avoidance of behaviors associated with femininity (Liang et al., 2011; Norwalk et al., 2011).

O’Neil, Helms, Gable, David, and Wrightsman (1986) contended that gender role conflict masculine characteristics are normative but unhealthy and psychologically damaging. O’Neil (1981b) posited that men’s unexpressed emotions may result in explosive anger and inhibit close healthy intimacy.

According to O’Neil (1981a, 1981b), the United States has socialized men to a rigid enactment of traditional male gender roles that lead to a fear of femininity. Participation in this type of behavior results in psychological harm with cognitive and emotional constraints that correlate with depression. Pollack (2006) contended that early

teachings of traditional psychology instructed parents to encourage their boys to be autonomous and to separate from their mother. The premature separation develops into a shame-based internalization and a disconnection from the basic need of forming successful relationships referred to as gender straitjacketing (Pollack, 1998, 2000). Young boys in school settings are confronted with a deluge of innuendos not to be a sissy. These critical judgments suppress individual emotional expression, which causes serious behavioral problems in adolescence and in adulthood.

Pollack (2006) posited that young boys are experiencing profound emotional pain that may not be easily diagnosed because it is often hidden and masked. Most boys follow the rigid code of masculinity and learn not to express their emotions because they must be seen as men. The demeanor of boys is usually masked by a strong internalized masculine ideology that includes an aura of ruggedness, aggressiveness, and fear of being seen acting like a girl. The internalization of pain masks whether the child is depressed or is experiencing suicidal thoughts. Pollack (1995) contended that U.S. society has overlooked the psychological and emotional needs of boys. Instead, U.S. society has accepted myths that young boys do not need the same attention and emotional nurturance as girls do. Emotional deprivation and lack of human connection in the early development of young boys is later linked to emotional issues and acts of violence. The behaviors that men experience are a result of society deliberately advocating that boys should be separated from their mother and father at a vulnerable age, sometimes as early as 4 or 5 years old (Pollack, 1995).

Pollack (2006) revealed that young boys are experiencing more uncertainty regarding which role to follow. Mainstream society has evolved for girls and women and

is placing more emphasis on a broadened role for men. Men are expected to be open and vulnerable, but are also expected to adhere to strong traditional macho standards. They lack an appropriate father role model who creates a balance of healthy emotional expression and masculine qualities that leads to healthy intimate relationships that empower both men and women to nurture and empathize with each other's needs.

### **Machismo**

Machismo is a prominent ideology found in various cultures, races, and ethnicities. Machismo is an exaggerated form of masculinity prescribed and approved of in some sectors of societies to carry on the patriarchal principles that men are to be aggressive and dominant, and women are to be submissive, nurturing, and adaptive (Saez, Casado, & Wade, 2009). Houle, Mishara, and Chagnon (2008) posited that men who conform to the traditional masculine gender role are more likely to ascribe to suicidal ideation. Men who strongly adhere to masculine norms experience mental health problems with limited support from friends or family. The construct of traditional masculine gender roles has been associated with major health problems, such as anxiety, depression, and an unwillingness to seek psychological help for emotional problems (Good & Wood, 1995; O'Neil, 2008). Herrera, Owens, and Mallinckrodt (2013) posited that many researchers have concluded that internalized and restricted emotional expression increases stress and limits human potentiality.

Numerous researchers have drawn great interest and inquiry about both criminal and noncriminal behavior of men who highly endorse traditional masculinity. Masculinized ideologies are often disguised as cynical jokes or pranks that target women directly or are displaced toward effeminate men (Muir & Seitz, 2004; Rogers, 1966).

The severity of violence and aberrant behavior by men toward women or other men contributes to the promotion of masculinity and deviant demeanor (Muir & Seitz, 2004). Muir and Seitz (2004) noted that masculine beliefs are mandatory requirements for men to be considered part of an elite status and further promote the group's subcultural thinking and values. They are critical not only inherently within the group, but also as a public endorsement of what a man should be. Fragoso and Kashubeck (2000) posited that machismo is an explicit variant of traditional male gender role beliefs historically rooted in the Hispanic culture. The machismo construct has been highly associated with depression and psychosocial problems for Mexican American men. The word machismo has been historically associated with dissenting profiles of male characteristics and comportment of Hispanic males. According to Herrera et al. (2013), Arciniega, Anderson, Tovar-Blank, and Tracy (2008) gave a new meaning to the machismo construct by finding two comparable variants that they called traditional machismo and caballerismo. Traditional masculinity consists of hypermasculinity, control of women, anger, overdrinking, and other negative male behaviors toward both women and men. Arciniega et al. found in a study of Hispanic men that traditional machismo was associated with restricted emotional release or with Alexithymia, which is the inability to express emotions or describe feelings; defensive mechanisms used as a coping strategy; and aggressive and antisocial behavior toward others. Arciniega et al. also found that caballerismo is an important construct in the Hispanic culture. The root goes back to medieval beliefs of honor during the time of the Spanish horsemen (caballeros). Caballerismo is the modern term given to men who uphold positive images of their family and who are nurturing, not dominant, lovingly connected, and good providers.

### **Family Hierarchy**

According to Falicov (2005), machismo has some affirming qualities as caretaker, provider, and emotional connection with the family. Machismo represents a father's fidelity to his children and family. Mexican American fathers are usually involved in promoting a close relationship with their children, which takes precedence over his marital relationship. These fathers' primary concern is the welfare of their children and protecting and guiding them. Thus, the father's fidelity creates an interdependence of both the family and extended members. Falicov posited that Mexican American families are oriented toward centrality and cohesiveness of family units with an emphasis on harmony within the family. Some of these aspects (the interconnectedness, beliefs, and values) are easily overlooked by society as men having dominance and control over their wife and family.

According to Falicov (2005), acculturation is changing the dynamics of Mexican American families that are slowly evolving from a patriarchal to an egalitarian culture due to more women working outside the home and enjoying financial freedom. The parental framework rests upon a hierarchal view that parents are to be respected and may render various forms of discipline, with both parents involved in making decisions and in raising children. Falicov contended that parents use a form of punitive discipline with their children through methods of shaming, false promises, and harsh warning to change or improve a child's behavior. Falicov posited that the differential views and practices between the Mexican American culture and the Anglo-American culture are interdependence between mother and child and young adults living at home, although the Anglo-American culture believes and encourages individuation and autonomy and that

the children leave home by the time they are 18 years old. Young male Mexican American adults usually leave their parents' home when they get married.

Becerra (1988) noted although most Mexican American families remain intact with a two-parent household and divorce is rare compared to Anglo-Saxon families, the data are not the same for the urban poor who live in common law marriages. Meerloo (1968) posited that a child without a male role model might degenerate into aggression and violence. A father represents a stabilizing anchor of strength, protection, and resilience who teaches his children about reality and his world.

### **Mexican American Masculinity**

Cervantes (2005) posited that both injustice and discrimination affect the manhood of Mexican Americans. Mexican American males are stereotyped as abusers of women, alcohol, and drugs; irresponsible (Cervantes 2005; Panitz, McConchie, Sauber, & Fonesca, 1983); and having macho man syndrome, which is a term associated with the same traits as machismo. Cervantes noted that many researchers (i.e., De La Cancela, Mirande, Rodriguez, & Madsen) claimed machismo is an inaccurate label for Mexican American males that entails racist cultural generalizations of innuendos and extrapolations from traditionally male-oriented poor communities. According to Panitz et al. (1983), these types of ethnic and cultural generalizations are inherently severe and damaging to the ethnicity of Mexican Americans, reduce their value as human beings, and denigrate their intellectual skills. The societal culture expects and condones certain behaviors such as womanizing and alcohol abuse as common structures of behavior in the Latino culture. Panitz et al. posited that machismo comes from the word *macho*, which signifies male, and is an often misunderstood and misinterpreted construct of the Latino

male. The most common application of machismo is to describe male sexual prowess and aggressive behavior as a negative typology used by the dominant culture to describe Latin men. The Latin ideals of macho are prized by the Latin culture; courage, fearlessness, pride, honor, and charisma are the skills valued and respected as a leader of both men and his family (Panitz et al., 1983).

Cervantes (2005) supported the findings by De La Cencela, Mirande, and Rodriguez, who reported that a more relevant understanding of the Mexican American culture and machismo behaviors and beliefs is directly associated to the socioeconomic and historical conditions of the dominant culture. The more positive perspective and thinking focuses on the macro system of socioeconomics rather than condemning and stigmatizing a particular culture or group. Anya (1996) found the machismo theme in the southwestern United States included patterns of community and family care that sometimes involve confronting hardships for the sake of family and community. The concept of *aguantar* means an individual must endure the difficulty or pain of discrimination and injustice for the sake of family and community. Cervantes noted that exaggerated forms of masculinity exist in particular subcultures and socioeconomic statuses. Thus, magnified aspects of hypermasculinity in Mexican American males surface as an outcome of an oppressed ability to express the natural social role as a Mexican American male. Cervantes noted that impaired behaviors demonstrated through machismo were a result of repressed anger. Mexican American men felt forced to conform to the oppression of the societal dominant culture. Societal norms strongly influenced these men to integrate cultural expectations into their family, employment, and personal life.

## **Deviant Conduct**

Lynskyj (1990) noted that the masculine male is the true personification of traditional values and beliefs. Consequently, the message received by young men is that deviance is sanctioned and justified in a male-dominated society and culturally accepted (Hale, 2012; Muir & Seitz, 2004). The purpose of deviance is to create a distinction in sexual differentiation and male superiority over women and homosexual men (Muir & Seitz, 2004). According to Muir and Seitz (2004), traditional male values are learned behaviors to which men conform. They adhere to the group's thinking of degradation while engaging in acts ranging from simple horseplay to imposing injury on another person. The group's subculture promotes the survival of deviant rituals and philosophies to maintain solidarity and cohesiveness (Melde & Esbensen, 2011; Muir & Seitz, 2004). Men who continually agree to maintain traditional masculinity may have an innate propensity toward antisocial behavior (Melde & Esbensen, 2011). Muir and Seitz (2004) posited that the proclivity of hypermasculinized males is to be bullies, abuse alcohol, and partake in promiscuous sexual behaviors.

Perilla (1999) posited that males who follow traditional gender male roles are also influenced by cultural scripts that define Latino male social behaviors; for example, the man is considered the authority and the head of the house, while the woman and children are subservient. Perilla noted Latino males are commonly profiled as machismo, although Mexican American male machismo denotes a more negative connotation than in other cultures. Similar typologies of machismo exist in Europe, Asia, Africa, and the United States. *Macho* has become an acceptable household word in American popular culture. It is used to describe male rock stars and male sex symbols in both film and



television and is denoted as a positive insignia of strength, masculinity, and sex appeal (Mirande, 1988). Mirande (1988) contended the word macho is used negatively to profile Mexicans or Latinos, with attributes of male dominance, patriarchy, authoritarianism, and spousal abuse, whereas Anglo-Saxons enjoy the reputation of being macho and imbued with manhood and masculinity. Perilla noted that Lugo defined machismo as a linguistic description that magnified maleness as a deification of physical transcendence and savage force used against women and as a confirmation of cultural domination of men over women (Diaz-Guerrero, 1996).

Perilla (1999) explained that Mirande found a duality of the construct of machismo that includes two polar views of masculinity. One side accentuates the negative externalized aspects: sexual prowess, physical strength, intoxication, and power over women. The other emphasizes the positive internalized aspects: respect, courage, honor, loyalty, responsibility, strength, control, and communication. Perilla added that other researchers, such as Marin and Martin, found that machismo ideals also included responsibility, courage, sense of honor, and being good providers. Perilla noted that Ramirez claimed machismo will always be a negative construct because it lacks both internal and external consistency in its views and treatment of others. If *respecto* is important to a man in his culture, then it cannot be used discriminately and yielded to only those he feels are entitled to respect. Perilla suggested a closer examination of the components of machismo and its historical conditions related to intimate relationships, since it seems to be a common gateway to violence in all cultures.

## Violence

Muir and Seitz (2004) emphasized the work of McGuire in the investigation of violent initiation rites. McGuire found that the subcultural group's infrastructure strength rested on supportive communication and the expression of loyalty to the group. Similar forms of loyalty and language are found in gang memberships, such as using hand symbols to communicate and display solidarity (Melde & Esbensen, 2011). Each member in the group is expected to demonstrate bravado in confronting rival enemies to protect and show loyalty to the group (Melde & Esbensen, 2011). In gang membership, violence and fighting is an organized and effective method that develops cohesiveness in the group and propagates bonding (Muir & Seitz, 2004). These ritualized acts serve as a rite of passage to manhood that determines whether the candidate is accepted into or denied access to the group (Jones, 2000).

According to Hunter and Dantzker (2005), the social theory of Burger and Akers posited that criminal behavior is learned through operant conditioning and reinforcement, which means that the individual's voluntary and deviant acts are either rewarded or punished. Environment and association with peers play a key role in promoting deviant behaviors in young men and in the development of masculine identity (Hale, 2012). Akers and Sellers (2004) explained that what encouraged an individual to engage in deviant behaviors is related to the individual's attitude, motive, and thoughts about what he considers morally good or bad. Akers and Sellers's theory rests on four factors that influence an individual to proceed with deviant behavior:

1. Differential associations occur when an individual engages in a criminal act with the group he receives support from and socializes with. A strong bond

occurs as the individual accepts the values and thinking of the group (Akers & Sellers, 2004; Hale, 2012).

2. Differential reinforcement rewards aberrant behavior through social interaction, thus initiating the reconstruction of masculinity through community and a sense of belonging (Akers & Sellers, 2004; Hale, 2012).  
The reconstruction process reframes manhood by teaching toughness and aggression through camaraderie and engaging in aberrant acts (Hale, 2012).
3. Imitation occurs when an individual mimics the same deviant behavior he saw modeled by another member.
4. Approving definition occurs when an individual's thought process justifies a behavior by endorsing it momentarily as a "positive definition" (Akers & Sellers, p. 86) in committing a deviant behavior; thus, increased exposure to violence desensitizes a person to less resistance in performing the next deviant act (Hale, 2012).

Reconstruction of male identity and values is obtained through strong solidarity and men bonding against a common enemy, whether fictitious or real (Hale, 2012; Muir & Seitz, 2004). Machismo is the amplified representation of masculinity, where man does not simply posture manhood or its attributes but is fully engaged in the conquest of women, abuse of alcohol, violence, and using vulgarism (Muir & Seitz, 2004). Machismo is a misused term applied to Latinos and a disparaging term often used to describe Mexican American males. Machismo in its simplest form characterizes the standards of masculinity that esteem violence and control in every area of the culture (Levinson et al., 1978). Rogers (1966) contended that the mechanisms of patriarchy and

misogyny needed to be explored at their inception. Other researchers have indicated that misogyny has been in existence and entrenched in society since the fall of man.

### **Misogyny**

The historical account of misogynist thinking and behavior can be traced to early apocrypha and scriptural writings. During this period of history, the Jewish culture and the Christian churches were influential in teaching men about male dominance and warning men to avoid women and to keep them in subjection (Rogers, 1966).

According to Rogers (1966), two types of opposing historical descriptions of women exist in the Bible. One is the Jahvist and the other is the Elohist account, where both Jahvist and Elohist mean God. In the Elohist account, both man and woman were created in God's image at the same time; both genders existed in God. The opposing Jahvist view explained that woman was made from Adam's rib, and her function was that of an assistant or an adjunct to lift Adam's mood. Rogers posited that biblical scholars depicted women as villainous seductresses who ruined reputable heroics through ominous plots, as in the story of Samson and King David. Man accepted his privilege to use and own a woman as his property; accordingly, scripture indicates man is made in the glory of God, while the woman was made for the glory of man. Early Christian misogyny was founded on biblical exegesis of guilt, shame about sex, and the subjugation of women (Rogers, 1966).

Millett (2005) explained that the attributes of patriarchy continue to exist, with a purpose to influence both genders to create an internalization of masculinity ideology. The effects of patriarchy determine economic status, adaptive temperament, and individuals' position in society. These are all important systems that cause serious

psychological complications for both genders, as the division of power in a patriarchal marriage distinguishes male superiority. Numerous researchers have indicated that some traits of masculinity ideology are specifically oriented to rigid gender roles and that machismo or traditional masculinity may be detrimental to both the psychological and the physical well-being of a male (Saez et al., 2009). The endorsement of the masculinity ideology continues in all sectors of professional life and relationships. Saez et al. (2009) posited that masculinity ideology is a learned behavior that children assimilate through parental roles and their culture of what is gender-appropriate behavior. Machismo has been identified among Hispanic males with three distinguishable maladaptive attributes: (a) insensitive sexuality toward women, (b) self-assigned description and perception of violence as being manly, and (c) a belief that taking high risks is thrilling. Other researchers have indicated that machismo is associated with aberrant and violent behavior with substance abuse and criminal behavior. Brooks (1990) posited that young men exposed to violence develop a hypervigilant state before they fully engage in combat (i.e., military or gangs). The new trainees are heavily invested into a new way of thinking: (a) violence is idealized, (b) the world is divided into friend or foe, and (c) the enemies are depersonalized and justifiable targets of any violent impulses. Young men who learn to fight and kill in combat are socialized into a warrior mentality and idealize violence as a form of prestige and honor (Brooks, 1990).

### **Shame and Guilt**

The concepts of shame and guilt are often used interchangeably without considering the meaning of both words. The distinguishing quality between guilt and shame is that guilt is internalized or incorporated into oneself. Guilt is commonly based

on socialized values (i.e., parental values), which contrasts with shame, in which the disapproval comes from the outside. Recipients experience shame as a form of humiliation, derision, or criticism by another person (Lynn, 1961). Lynn (1961) noted that guilt produces cognitive distortions such as *I am no good* (as result of wrongdoing), whereas the conceptual difference of shame brings into existence the feelings of inadequacy and inferiority. Conjecturally, the word shame is chronicled in English linguistics and appears in some derivative in all Germanic languages, with no ancestral relation found for guilt in any language. The origin of the meaning of the word shame is to conceal or to enclose with a covering; it also represents a wound. The origin of the word guilt is from Old English linguistics that refers to being duplicitous, meaning both guilt and debt. The following section on guilt and shame will be primarily limited to the effects of shame in men.

Stouffer et al. (1949) and Pleck (1981, 1995) noted that unsuccessfully meeting one's goals or the expectations of society leads to emotional distress. On occasion, such men may surmise their own outcomes as societal infractions of traditional male gender roles. Efthim, Kenny, and Mahalik (2001) explained Bem summarized how gender role schemas influence how men and women perceive themselves and their environment through gender-tinted cognitive lenses. The distress is then internalized and experienced as shame and failure. Stouffer et al. posited that the construct of masculinity varies among Americans, but the objectives are courage, endurance, and toughness. Avoidance of all effeminate qualities or displays of emotions and feelings is the universal code of *being a man* (i.e., being tough, courageous, not being vulnerable or weak). Fear of inadequacy and cowardice in battle or the display of emotions in anticipation of some

specific danger is met with harsh social disapproval. A man is tested to the group's standards of courageous acts and attains respect for participation in combat. Harper, Austin, Cercone, and Arias (2005) posited that Boyle and Vivian found that men with behavioral symptoms of intense violence often displayed a more pervasive and magnified anger toward their spouse than did men who were nonviolent; consequently, spouse-specific anger is related to a higher probability of men's violence. A strong correlation exists between physical and psychological abuse; it is uncertain how the extent of anger is related to the commission of psychological abuse.

Shame may be a key component in predicting psychological abuse due to its proximity to anger. Shame is an antagonistic emotion theorized as a result of intensified awareness of being appraised negatively and ostracized by others (Harper et al., 2005). Individuals faced with shame experience a sense of having low self-worth, lacking power, and being deprived of authority and influence when humiliation is a repetitive occurrence (Gilbert, 1989; Tangney, Wagner, Hill-Barlow, Marschall, & Gramzow, 1996). Tangney et al. (1996) found that shame is correlated with a significant increase in anger responses in all ages, from children to adults. Harper et al. (2005) conducted a study with 150 male college students to determine whether a relationship between shame and psychological abuse existed. They proposed that if anger mediates between shame and psychological abuse, it is uncertain whether the expression of emotion (affect) would manage and regulate the intensity of anger and the response to psychological abuse. Results of the experiment indicated correlations existed for all invariables presented in the analyses. Psychological abuse was frequently reported as a behavior in the forms of insults and degradation. Significant correlations were found between anger and shame as

precursors to psychological abuse. The more shame and humiliation the male experiences, the more intense anger he suppresses, which results in increased levels of psychological abuse toward others and poor affect regulation.

Others researchers examined shame as a source of emotional wounds from long-term effects of childhood early trauma, including (a) exposure to physical abuse, (b) shaming by a parent, and (c) insecure attachment (Dutton, 1999). Exposure to shame, parental violence, and insecure attachment results in an abusive personality. Dutton (1999) and Lewis (1987) posited the interpretation of various personality assessments revealed that poor impulse control, depression, externalization, and low self-esteem were indications of abusive men with borderline personality disorders with significant correlations to paternal rejection, physical abuse, and shaming experiences. Early trauma experienced by a child generates serious long-term effects, whereas the same events experienced by an adult produce minimal aftereffect. Consequently, the developing mind of a child is left with the impression that the world is dangerous and unsafe (Pynoos, Steinberg, & Goenjian 1996).

Dutton, van Ginkel, and Starzomski (1995) found children who experienced shaming by a parent, mostly the father, often developed abusive personalities. Scheff (1987) described shame as a transformation into rage, which he referred to as the *shame–rage spiral*, in which a child attempts to protect the self from obliteration. Children exposed to a triad of shame, parental violence, and inconsistent nurturing do not have the protection of a secure attachment against trauma (Bowlby, 1973). Lyons-Ruth (1996) contended that one of the important areas discovered pertaining to child psychopathology is the correlation between cruel and poor parental discipline and hostile behavioral



problems. Dutton (1999) added that Schore used a psychobiological model to demonstrate how maternal sensitivity such as attunement is connected to neural pathways that lead to interactional synchrony within the mother–infant dyad. Infants learn to self-soothe and to regulate emotions that are essential for future relationships. Dutton (1999) noted Schore’s explanation of shame was as a strong manipulator that controls interpersonal relationships that adversely affect the attachment bond between parent and child.

Efthim et al. (2001) investigated the phenomenon of gender role stress and the disposition to shame, guilt, and externalization. Efthim et al. recalled the work of Lewis (1971) and Tangney (1990), who discovered externalization, which is the reaction of projecting blame to negative events as a fundamental defensive tactic in dealing with shame and guilt. Externalization may be an indicator to overstep and regulate conscious affect, especially when shame quickly mutates into humiliated fury. Efthim et al. posited that some people are more predisposed to the construct of shame proneness and guilt proneness and experience more situational events. Shame proneness has been related to depression (Harder, Cutler, & Rockart, 1992; Hoblitzelle, 1987; Wright, O’Leary, & Balkin, 1989), anger and aggression (Tangney, Wagner, Fletcher, & Gramzow, 1992), and pathological narcissistic personality (Gramzow & Tangney, 1992). Guilt proneness is less neurologically compromised, and some evidence suggests it is also linked to depression (Harder et al., 1992; Hoblitzelle, 1987; Wright et al., 1989). Externalization is significantly related to depression; in some empirical studies, researchers erroneously related guilt to externalization (Ferguson & Crowley, 1997; Tangney, 1995; Tangney et al., 1992).

Lewis (1992) found the variables in gender role stress that produce the most distress and shame, which included unsuccessful achievements or goals or feeling sexually impotent. Efthim et al. (2001) described three essential principles as a basis of their findings that male gender role stress is attributed to shame, guilt, and externalization:

1. When an individual fails to follow societal demands or socially expected behaviors, he or she will feel shame and guilt and receive a defamatory evaluation. As an indicator, most children are socialized early in development to feel guilt and shame for not following cultural norms.
2. Infraction of gender roles results in unfavorable consequences and in poor internalization of self, which results in shame.
3. Men see shame as transgressing masculine norms; feel unsafe, defenseless, and out of control; and turn to defensive tactics such as externalization to reduce their emotional pain.

Mahalik et al. (1998) posited that men who experience masculine gender role conflict externalize their anger using psychological defenses. Efthim et al. (2001) described Eisler and his fellow researchers Blalock, Gillespie and Skidmore's study of 207 participants, primarily Caucasians and Catholics, and revealed the following conclusions of gender role stress and externalization are related to feelings of shame:

1. Men who followed traditional male gender roles felt uncomfortable with their employer or supervisor being female.
2. The configuration of the male gender role is such that men must have power over women and emotions.

3. Consequently, men would externalize their emotional distress and disown it.
4. Men were fearful of not measuring up in physical competence, at work, and sexually, which all linked to guilt.

The results revealed male stress is associated to the four preceding gender role stress variables. Men fear violating social norms and traditional roles determined by society as standards of masculine and feminine behaviors. These norms are taught to young boys early in life when they observe other males and are reminded that little boys do not cry. Thus, not conforming to societal norms of what defines masculinity at work or in private brings symptoms of depression, anger, and shame.

In summary, shame is a powerful construct. Dickerson, Kemeny, Aziz, Kim, and Fahey (2004) contended that shame is a self-imposed emotion elicited by poor decisions, wrong actions, and personal failures. Shame can result in self-blame, self-criticism, low self-esteem, and negative cognitions that can lead to significant psychological and physiological decline, possible depression, and complete isolation. Dickerson et al. posited that negative cognitions of self were associated with shame and a weaker immunological system. Withdrawal is the central element of shame, appearing as a behavioral characteristic of isolation and disappearing, which indicates compliance to surrender and emotionally disengaging. Additional researchers have described a process called pro-inflammatory cytokines that occurs as a biobehavioral effect that may be associated with emotional disengagement. Symptoms include fever, inflammation, and tissue deterioration that may result in death (Dickerson et al., 2004; Dinarello, 2000). Dickerson et al. revealed a gradual reduction of CD4 helper T-cells that adversely affect immune deficiency and result in fatal progression of HIV in gay and bisexual men. In a

7-year study, Dickerson et al. found biobehavioral and psychobiological affect in the correlation of shame and the immune system that are responsible for producing cytokine molecules that keep a person from engaging socially. Cytokines excite the hypothalamic-pituitary adrenal axis and cortisol levels that directly influence and modify the increment in affective disorders (i.e., depression). Dickerson et al. conducted a study with 51 college students and asked them to provide saliva and oral mucosal transudate samples to test for hormonal and immunologic variations. For each of the 3 days, participants provided oral mucosal transudate samples after 30 minutes of exposure to a stressor and then answered a mood questionnaire.

The participants were divided into two groups: control and experimental (Dickerson et al., 2004). For 3 days, the experimental group was asked to focus on an event that was traumatic and for which they blamed themselves, either a new psychological stressor or a traumatic event already experienced and for which they continue to blame themselves. The participants were asked to write what they felt about the event that occurred or the new stressor and their feelings and emotions associated with not living up to their own or others' expectations. The control group was told to write about events that took place for them within the preceding 24 hours (i.e., activities and schedule in detail) and what they ate for the 3 days. They were to write factually and objectively (Dickerson et al., 2004).

Additional questionnaires and assessments were given that measured emotions specifically related to guilt, shame, and depression (Dickerson et al., 2004). The findings of the study showed that biological effects occur when negative cognitions of self-blame and emotions of shame are elicited. Proinflammatory cytokine levels increased in the

experimental group compared to the control group. The more shame experienced, the higher and greater the activity found in cytokine levels. Cortisol levels were not affected in either group. The study demonstrated that experiencing shame might affect the immune system and result in long-term physiological effects such as rheumatoid arthritis and cardiovascular disease. Consequently, men's self-appraisal and emotional process are key factors in determining whether positive or negative physiological variables affect the immune and psychobiological system (Dickerson et al., 2004).

This chapter addressed various issues of gender role conflict and the ways it relates with men's health issues, depression, and anger. In essence, the system of extreme manliness and the effort to avoid all that is related to femininity has dominated men's thoughts and behavior. Masculinity has stereotyped all men from different walks of life, including the subcultures of gang life. The underlying themes of conflict between the sexes are rooted in Biblical times; male attitudes endorse a patriarchal society defined by the norms and expectations of masculine and feminine behavior. Zinn (1979) posited that researchers must maintain a cultural awareness to differentiate between cultural ideals and genuine family behavior that the Mexican American woman is the real power in the family and she intentionally influences her husband. The next chapter explicates the phenomenological approach and the method that focuses on the general meaning of the phenomenon based on individuals' lived experience. The study unfolds with semistructured questions that reveal the essence of individuals' lived experience that allowed exploration and analysis of the given phenomenon.

## Definition of Terms

Conformity to masculine norms: “Conformity to masculine norms is defined as meeting societal expectations for what constitutes masculinity in one’s public or private life” (Mahalik et al., 2003, p. 3).

Disidentification: “Focus on the process of psychological separation/individuation from the caregiver, be it mom or dad” (Blazina, 2004, p. 154).

Dominant culture:

Power differential makes it possible for the dominant group to discriminate against the less powerful minority. The following tactics are used: stereotyping, avoidance, discrimination, physical attack and extermination as possible strategies of control. The identifiable groups, lower in power, are treated differently and pejoratively. (Hays-Thomas, 2012, p. 170)

Enculturation: “To adapt to a culture and adopt its values” (Mosher & Tomkins, 1988, p. 73).

Femininity: According to Mosher (1991, p. 200), masculinity and femininity are antonyms; but, as theoretical concepts, their defining characteristics are not always logical opposites. Masculinity can be opposed not only to femininity but also to childlikeness, inferiority, homosexuality, sissyness, effeminacy, cowardice, illness, weakness, emotionalism, and more.

Gang: Hagedorn (2007, p.309) gangs are organizations of the socially excluded. Gangs usually begin as unsupervised adolescent peer groups and most remain so, some institutionalize in barrios, favelas, ghettos, and prisons. Often these institutionalized gangs become business enterprises within the informal economy and a few are linked to

international criminal cartels. Most gangs share a racialized or ethnic identity and a media-diffused culture. Gangs have variable ties to conventional institutions and, in given conditions, assume social, economic, political, cultural, religious, or military roles.

Gender: “Socially constructed roles of men and women implicating different social norms and cultural expectations for both sexes” (Moller-Leimkuhler, 2003, p. 1).

Gender role: “Behaviors and expectations, and role sets defined by society as masculine or feminine, which is embodied in the behavior of the individual man or woman and culturally regarded as appropriate to males or females” (O’Neil, 1981b, p. 203).

Gender role conflict: “A psychological state in which gender roles have negative consequences on the individual or others. Gender role conflict occurs when rigid, sexist, or restricted gender roles result in personal restrictions, devaluation, or violation of others or self” (O’Neil et al., 1995, p. 166).

Gender role strain: “When rigid or restrictive gender roles learned during socialization prohibit a person from using one’s human potential” (O’Neil, 1981b, p. 204).

Gender script: Mosher (1991, p. 200) noted a gender script is a set of rules for ordering information in sets of scenes relevant to ideologies of gender; the psychologically magnified rules interpret, produce, direct, defend, and evaluate an individual’s actions or interpersonal transactions in gender relevant scenes, often without conscious awareness. The traditional gender-ideological script bonds men to men and to men to women, differentiates men from women, and divides the two sexes into unjustly stratified collectivities.

Hypermasculinity: Mosher (1991, p. 200) noted hypermasculinity is a disposition to engage in exaggerated sex-typed performances realized by enacting manhood as physicality and by embodying manly dispositions in scenes evoking a gender script. When enacted, hypermasculinity consists of manly actions in gender-relevant scenes that embody dispositions toward toughness, daring, virility, and violence.

Machismo: According to Mosher (1991, p. 201), the ideology of machismo is a system of ideas forming a worldview that chauvinistically exalts male dominance by assuming masculinity, virility, and physicality to be the ideal essence of real men who are adversarial warriors competing for the scarce resources (including women as chattel) in a dangerous world.

Masculine mystique: “Masculine mystique constitutes an intricate composition of values and beliefs that define optimal masculinity in society. These values and beliefs are learned during early socialization and are based on rigid gender role stereotypes and beliefs about man and masculinity” (O’Neil, 1981b, p. 205).

Masculinity: “Not ascribed to all men, masculinity is a social status that is achieved only by a man who demonstrates the prototypic characteristics of a traditional standard gender identity/role for men in his culture” (Mosher, 1991, p. 200).

Masculinity ideology: “Ingrained beliefs about the saliency of keeping and adhering to culturally defined norms for male behavior” (Pleck, 1981, p. 19).

Minority: “Any group of people who because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are signaled out from others in the society in which they live for differential unequal treatment” (Millett, 2005, p. 54).



Nonconformity to masculine norms: “Non-conformity to masculine norms is defined as not meeting societal expectation of what constitutes masculinity in one’s public and private life” (Mahalik, et al., 2003, p. 3).

Politics: “Refers to the hierarchal structure of relationships where one set of individuals is constrained or dominated by another” (Millett, 2005, p. 37).

Relational dread: According to Bergman (1995),

Relational dread is a process. It arises in the intensity of relationship, mostly with women. The process of dread is relational, not only intrapsychic. While there is, as always, a transferential component, relational dread is not merely a “maternal transference.” Dread arises not from the woman reminding the man of his mother, but from his being in a relational process where complex things are happening fast on both sides. (p. 82)

Restrictive emotionality: A man’s difficulty with his own emotional disclosure, as well as discomfort with the emotional expressiveness of others. Restrictive emotionality is a measure of rigidity in avoiding emotional expression. Men who restrict their emotionality are described as neglecting or repressing the feminine parts of themselves and being frightened by feelings that seem womanly feelings by blocking the awareness and expression of vulnerable emotions (Mahalik et al., 1998, p. 248).

Traumatic abrogation: Pollock (1992) noted the work of Winnicott, who described the

process of male development as a gender-specific vulnerability to traumatic abrogation of the early holding environment . . . an impingement in boys’

development—a normative life-cycle loss—that may later in life, leave many adult men at risk for fears of intimate connection. (p. 41)

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

In this chapter, the methodological elements used to identify and investigate the common themes among Mexican American gang members whose emotional development and expression were constrained through societal expectations of masculinity that played a significant role in thinking and behavior are delineated. Researchers conduct phenomenological research to explore problems and complex issues that are similar and different and give the researchers a better understanding of the complexity of the issues presented (Creswell, 2013; Giorgi, 2009). Qualitative research methods are concerned with rich life experiences and a deeper insight into individuals' perspectives through detailed interviewing and observations to understand social and individual perspectives (Moustakas, 1994). According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research creates a complex, holistic picture that allows an observer into the world of an individual through interviews, linguistic descriptions, and analysis of their words and themes, all unfolding in a natural setting. Therefore, a qualitative approach using in-depth interviews was the best method to investigate themes of restricted emotionality, violence, anger, discrimination, and machismo in the Mexican American gang culture. Conducting a qualitative study allowed the participants' voices to be heard with the integration of cultural values and allowed the researcher to hold and understand the phenomenon of their lived experiences of being Mexican American gang members profiled as criminals living in a dominant culture and how they confront the constraints of their everyday world (Ojeda, Flores, Rosales Meza, & Morales, 2011).

The sense of phenomenon means the researcher must be fully present and engaged cognitively without judgments or assumptions to understand what is being

communicated by the speaker (Giorgi, 2009). Moustakas's (1994) approach for conducting a phenomenological study included four elements: (a) epoché, (b) phenomenological reduction, (c) imaginative variation, and (d) synthesis. Epoché required the researcher to listen to the participant without any bias or prejudgments. Moustakas advised that researchers maintain a journal of thoughts and feelings prior to conducting the research and use the journal to indicate how the researcher affected the study through preconceived ideas or judgments about the participants' culture or ethnicity during the interview process. This process helped the researcher to be more receptive and taught the researcher to leave all feelings, thoughts, and preconceptions behind. The second step of the phenomenological study involved phenomenological reduction. Each word recorded and then transcribed and each statement stated had an equal value associated to the experience and then reexamined through the process of horizontalization, which meant that every statement had equal value with regard to the event experienced by the participant. This process called for looking at the textural qualities, the silkiness, the coarseness, the size, and the colors, as well as whether it was bold or bland, whether it was dynamic or stagnant, and what emotions were present through the interview process. The intensity, the frequency, and the quality of the emotions were examined. The third step was imaginative variation, which explained how the experience was perceived. Imaginative variation consisted of four steps: (a) examine the possible structures that give meaning or underlie the textural entities, (b) identify the themes that point to or underlie the phenomenon, (c) contemplate the possible feelings and thoughts associated with the phenomenon, and (d) investigate and identify the invariant structures that help to develop and understand the phenomenon.

The final step of Moustakas's (1994) phenomenological research is "the intuitive integration of the fundamental textural and structural descriptions into a unified statement of the essences, experiences of the phenomenon as a whole" (p. 100). By integrating each step of Moustakas's (1994) approach (epoché, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis), the researcher was able to ascertain the essence of each lived experience of Mexican American gang members.

### **Participants**

Polkinghorne (1989) posited that phenomenological studies minimally include between three and 25 participants. The number varies depending on the skill level of the participants' understanding and willingness to share lived experiences. The study included a small number of participants so the researcher could examine important aspects to recognize the various nuances in how the experience appeared (Polkinghorne, 2005). In qualitative research, the participants are selected because they provide pertinent and substantial contributions to investigating the phenomenon under study and are able to describe their experiences (Polkinghorne, 2005). In qualitative research, participants are recruited using purposeful sampling that can intentionally contribute to an informed understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study (Creswell, 2013). Criterion samplings were used in the methodology to ascertain quality assurance among the participants. For example, all participants had experienced the phenomenon of being a male Mexican American gang member. The study included the following criteria to select the appropriate participants: (a) Mexican American male, (b) age 24-49, (c) former gang member, and (d) willing to share his experience through in-

depth interviews. According to Moustakas (1994), participant selection is based on the following:

The research participant has experienced the phenomenon, is intensely interested in understanding its nature and meanings, is willing to participate in a lengthy interview (and perhaps a follow-up interview), grants the investigator the right to tape-record, possibly videotape the interview, and publish the data in a dissertation and other publications. (p. 107)

The following is a description of the participants, where they were recruited, and how they were invited to participate.

- Six participants were recruited from a local agency in Los Angeles and Ventura Counties, California (see Appendix A).
- The researcher selected the participants and invited them to participate in the study.
- The participants were Mexican American males.
- The participants were between the ages of 24 and 49 years old.
- The participants were former gang members.
- Each participant received an informed consent to sign (see Appendix B). His participation was voluntary.
- Each participant received a background questionnaire during the interview process.
- The researcher explained the purpose of the study to each participant, and each participant understood that participation was voluntary and that he could quit at any time.

- The participants understood that direct quotes would be used from the transcribed audiotapes, but no identifying information revealed.
- The participants were informed that a professional transcriber would transcribe the audiotapes.
- The participants signed a release to be audio recorded for the purpose of collecting data.
- The participant was informed of the possible need for a second 30-minute interview either by phone or in person to clarify some of the responses.
- The interview with each participant took approximately 2 hours.
- The participants were contacted to review the results and themes of their own interview and had the opportunity to request removal or to disguise any section in their narrative responses to the questions that identified or exposed them.

### **Risk and Safeguards**

Participants faced no known potential risk in this study, including personal discomfort associated with answering personal questions about masculinity and violence. Referrals were available for any participant who felt he might require counseling to aid in the processing of any personal discomfort that arose during or after the completion of the interview.

Participants' background information was identified through a random unique name at the onset of the study and no other form of identifying information was used that could be associated to the participant. All digital audio recordings were given the same unique name and will be erased 5 years after the study has been completed. The

transcripts and consent forms were kept separate in a locked cabinet to ensure confidentiality. The participants were reminded that their participation was completely confidential.

### **Data Analysis**

Qualitative data were obtained through a semistructured interview procedure outlined by Moustakas (1994). Five interviews were completed in Los Angeles and Ventura Counties, California. Data analysis commenced with preparing and organizing the data for analysis and presenting the data in a discussion (Creswell, 2013). The interview notes, demographic information with short answers, and transcripts were carefully analyzed and separated into emerging themes. The researcher began with a full description of the experience; looked for a thematic word, sentence, or the participant's entire story; and then broke it down into small meaning units or themes (Giorgi, 2009). Each statement was given equal value as the researcher examined each meaning unit to explain the meaning of the theme or unit concisely and analytically (Creswell, 2013; Giorgi, 2009; Moustakas, 1994).

The researcher read and reread the transcripts in their entirety several times. A written description of a participant's experience of the phenomenon is called a textural description. The next step was determining how the experience happened, which is called the structural description. The researcher contemplated the structures, the re-occurring themes and carefully considered the themes in the context which the phenomenon was experienced. The technique used was *imagination variation reflection* and analysis, which allowed the researcher to step into the imagination to understand fully the phenomenon represented. In the final step, the researcher created a synthesis of



both textural (individual experience) and structural descriptions (reoccurring themes) that included the holistic and complete essence of the experience to describe what participants experienced and how they experienced it.

The focus of phenomenological research is what participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon, which is not unlike other theoretical qualitative designs that theorize the participants' views (Creswell, Hanson, Clark Plano, & Morales, 2007). The strength of this approach is the ability to ascertain rich and elaborate descriptions of life experiences and individuals who have lived these complex lives. The study approach led to a richer understanding of the phenomenon and produced a consistent understanding that provided a way to understand a cultural-historical context that shapes young men's lives and the way masculinity was expressed through hypermasculinity and violence.

### **Interview Questions (IQ) and Theories**

Three theories guided the researcher in formulating the interview questions (IQ) based on three categories: (a) cultural roots of patriarchy, (b) restricted emotionality, and (c) dominant culture norms. The following theories helped in the formation of research interview questions (see Appendix C):

1. Men who hold strict gender limitation about women often experience more emotional restrictions, are less differentiated with more relationship problems, and fear the otherness of women (Blazina & Watkins, 2000; Millett, 2005; O'Neil, 1990). Millett (2005) contended that the study of gender was historically intended to outline sexual politics and the subordination of women by patriarchal powers. A new emergence has occurred in the gender role paradigm that acknowledges the differences between men and

women and recognizes that men have experienced victimization and oppressive sexism (O'Neil, 1981b); Pleck, 1976).

2. Mosher (1991) posited that the warrior mentality or macho personality is obtrusively violent to both men and women with a proclivity toward criminal and aggressive behavior.

3. Mahalik et al. (1998) described the causes of gender role expectations: (a) socioculture (usually the dominant society) has a significant effect on changing behavior, (b) the dominant society communicates its norms and expectations through descriptive and cohesive norms, (c) a group or an individual in society (i.e., the same economic status, sex, gender, and race or ethnicity) interprets how he or she sees or understands the norms of a dominant culture; (d) accepting or rejecting societal norms will determine how a person negotiates the level of his or her conformity or nonconformity. O'Neil (1981b) contended that the masculine mystique consists of values and beliefs of a given society or culture that characterize its expectations of masculinity. These values and beliefs are modeled to young children to learn the concepts of manhood.

The first area of study focused on the cultural roots of patriarchy:

1. What does it mean to be a male Mexican American gang member?

The second area of study was restricted emotionality:

2. As a male gang member, how did you deal with sadness and anger?

The third area of study was dominant culture, expectations, and norms:

3. What has been your experience in accepting the dominant cultural norms and expectations of you?

## **Instrumentation**

The instruments used in this phenomenological study consisted of semistructured in-depth interview questions (see Appendix A) and a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix D). Participants were asked three primary interview questions:

1. What does it mean to be a Mexican American male?
2. As a male gang member, how did you deal with sadness and anger?
3. What has been your experience in accepting the dominant cultural norms and expectations of you?

Other open-ended questions were asked related to the topic, but the focus of the above three questions was the intention of gathering data that led to the textural and structural essence of the participants' common experiences that provided an understanding of a common phenomenon.

The data came from semistructured in-depth interviews. According to Moustakas (1994), "Typically the long interview is the method through which data is collected on the topic and question. The phenomenological interview involves an informal, interactive process and utilizes open-ended comments and questions" (p. 114). The research interview questions were directly derived from the theories formulated by the researcher from the literature review.

## **Research Procedure (Step by Step)**

Data was collected in the form of an in-depth and personal one-on-one interview with each participant. Each of the five participants received a demographic background questionnaire to fill out. The procedure is systematically presented as follows:

I want to begin by thanking you for attending and taking the time to participate in this study. My name is Lorraine Gray and I will be conducting this interview as part of a doctoral dissertation project titled *Perceived Gender Role Conflict and Violence: Mexican American Gang Members*. Before we proceed with this interview, I want to quickly remind you that your participation is completely voluntary. This means that you can refuse to continue at any time. Whether you choose to participate or not will not have any impact, either negative or positive.

Before we begin, I want to give you a brief overview of what to expect today. I estimate that this entire process will take between 3 and 4 hours. We will have a break for 10 minutes every hour. I have provided some food and refreshments to help you through this time. Please feel free to help yourself. During any part of the interview, you may ask questions or terminate your participation. If you like, I can read the consent form or any other forms out loud to make sure you understand the process. Once you have agreed to participate, I will ask you to sign the consent form. Then you will be given a fictitious name that will not identify you in any way. For example, your name may be Roberto or Felix. You will use that name on all the documents to maintain confidentiality.

I will begin by handing you the informed consent for you to read or I can read it out loud for you, so that you are aware of your rights as a participant. After you understand the consent form, I will ask you to sign it and I will then place the consent form in a sealed envelope separate from all the other documents. Please feel free to interrupt if you have any questions.

Now I am going to give you a list of mental health providers in this area. If any of the material or subject matter leads to discomfort, please call any of the agencies for further assistance. I am also going to give you a background questionnaire. This questionnaire gives me information about who you are. I can read those questions out loud or you may read them on your own. Also, you can choose to write down your responses or I can write them down for you. I am going to start with the research questions (Appendix A). I want to make sure you that you allow me to audio record this session. Do you have any questions up to this point? All these forms, notes, audio recordings, and transcripts will be locked in a cabinet.

After the research and dissertation is completed, all data, including transcripts and audio recordings, will be destroyed after 5 years. I want to thank you again for your participation and for giving your time to this study. Now we will begin with the interview. I will ask you if you are aware that I am audio recording the interview and have given me permission to record the session. After you have responded to my question, we will begin with the interview. There are no right or wrong answers. Please feel free to share your lived experiences.

If you feel uncomfortable during the interview, please let me know and I will turn the audio off immediately. During the interview, I will refer to you only by your number code to protect your confidentiality and privacy. It is not meant to be disrespectful or invalidate what you are experiencing. Do you have any

questions? Then we will proceed. [The recorder was turned on and the interview began.]

At the end of the interview, I stated the following:

I want to thank you for your participation and time. Some participants may feel discomfort regarding the topics addressed up to this point. Do you remember the list I gave earlier with the names and telephone numbers of local health agencies? These professionals can provide you support in case you find it necessary to discuss any feelings that may have come up. It may be necessary for me to contact you in the next few days or weeks to clarify any response you stated. I will only call if it is necessary.

I will be contacting you to review the results and themes of your own interview. At that time, you will have the opportunity to ask me to remove or add to any section in your narrative responses to the questions that may identify you. Thank you again for your time and participation in this study.

## **Chapter 4: Results**

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of Mexican American males who were former gang members and their experiences with masculinity, expressing sadness, violence, and their experiences with the dominant culture. The results of the data obtained from reviewing the transcripts of the audio recordings from all six interviews revealed some general themes that occurred in each transcript. Additionally, Maxqda, a computer software program for qualitative studies, helped to formulate the six main themes. The software facilitated the process of identifying and selecting reoccurring themes. The researcher initially selected and identified six main themes and then identified corresponding subthemes for each of the six main themes selected. Thus, the 19 subthemes were identified as the common phenomena experienced by the participants. Three interview questions were used for the interview to develop the patterns and themes of all six participants. The three interview questions were part of the textural themes but are not included in Table 1. However, the responses to each interview question was broken down as units and integrated into the six main themes.

The results of the study followed the outlined procedure for qualitative analysis and interpretation. The first step began with preparing, organizing, and coding the data for analysis. The subsequent steps followed the procedure and maintained the appropriate protocol in analyzing data by using the basic procedure of phenomenological research as outlined earlier in Chapter 3 of this phenomenological study (Creswell, 2013; Giorgi, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). The themes presented are in sequential order from highly endorsed themes by the participants to the least endorsed. All participants were men. The participant ages ranged from 29 to 49 years, five of the six participants were

born in the United States. The majority of participants were raised by their single mothers, with the exception of one participant, who was raised by his grandparents. The lived experiences of the six participants varied, but their upbringing had similar components. The components include single parent, exposure to early childhood trauma, family violence, and neglect that contributed to the poor emotional regulation and aggressive behaviors developed by the participants when they were young. Using a phenomenological approach, six major themes developed through an examination of the participants' responses to the initial interview questions:

1. What does it mean to be a Mexican American male and gang member?
2. How do you experience sadness and anger?
3. What has been your experience in accepting dominant cultural norms and expectations of you?

### **Textural Themes**

The textural data analysis from the responses identified six main themes. The main six themes were as follows: (a) gang culture, (b) criminal behavior, (c) family culture, (d) emotions, (e) dominant culture, and (f) restricted emotionality. Further analyses developed 19 subthemes identified from common response descriptors. Each of the subthemes were categorized to one of the six original main themes. The responses to each interview questions were broken into units and categorized accordingly into the six main themes. The researcher addresses and discusses the six main components with their corresponding subthemes to present a concise overall picture. The structure was (a) to ensure clarity and understanding, (b) to avoid redundancy of similar explanations, (c) to ensure each main theme related to its unique subthemes, and (d) to ensure each main



theme and its corresponding subthemes provided an overall picture of pervasive patterns of beliefs and behaviors that led to criminal behavior (see Table 1).

Table 1

*The Six Main Themes With Highest to Lowest Frequency Ranking and Their Respective*

*Subthemes and Frequency Rankings*

Themes and subthemes	Frequency
Gang culture	
Respect	28
Identity	23
Loyalty	22
Acceptance	21
Criminal behavior	
Violence	46
Childhood trauma	30
Machismo-type behavior	26
Family culture	
Family Violence	32
Abandonment	28
Neglect	28
Emotions	
Anger	51
Sadness	25
Repressed feelings	21
Dominant culture	
Discrimination	35
Prejudice	35
Police harassment	25
Restricted emotionality	
Power and dominance	35
Difficulty with relationships	26
Fear of femininity	25

The following responses to the interview questions were identified as: 1, 2, and 3 to avoid confusion with the six main themes, then each response was broken into units and included into the six main themes with its corresponding subtheme.

**IQ1: What does it mean to be a Mexican American male?** Each participant described what it meant to him to be a Mexican American male, the social implications that affect how a non-White person is labeled, and the racial and ethnic focus of strategies that keep the ecological pollution in a neighborhood defined as poor and gang-related (Duran, 2009).

Carlos stated,

Being Mexican American means a struggle because we don't have the same privileges as the so-called dominant race. We don't have anything handed down to us and like we have to experience the dishwashing, the warehouse jobs, living in the ghetto impoverished neighborhoods.

Adolpho stated,

To me it means being a man, especially Mexican being real into being dominant, being violent, physical, that's who we are." Michael replied, "I guess you want them not to mess with you, you want them to know, 'Hey, I'm tougher than you. I'm like a leader to you, I'm mean, I'm capable of hurting you, so don't go there.

**IQ2: What were your experiences of sadness and anger?** Several participants described how they experienced sadness and anger. Fabricio stated, "I mean, there will be times that I will get sad, but the way I would be, like I said, the way I would deal with all that was, I would numb it with alcohol, drugs." Fabricio also alluded to how he experienced anger:

I'll be crying, like anger, like I was angry, and I would break the windows. I

build like a lot of anger, and a lot resentments towards my dad, because I can still remember him like even before he went to prison, when he used to drink.

Benedicto stated, "I wouldn't cry in front of people, but I mean, I always try to be this, say, strong person to where not to show emotions to other people." Benedicto also stated, "I'm used to being talked to a certain way that when somebody comes up and, for me not to be able to turn around and say come here and hit them, it builds up a lot of anger."

Abram stated, "We clashed a lot, and I had a lot of fights." Adolpho replied,

It's mostly like—because the old me would fight back. The old me will be like "What you saying?" and start a fight with them. The new me has to be like, "Come on, let's go. Let's go, let's get out of here." But the old me would have been like, "Let me go get my gun."

Adolpho stated, "I was getting high, I was using drugs, I was partying a lot, I just didn't really care. I just didn't really care." Michael replied, "I didn't go and visit you because I have a hate in my heart for what you did to us." Carlos stated, "Before sadness from just holding it in it would turn into anger, anger would turn into rage."

**IQ3: What were your experiences with accepting dominant cultural norms and expectations?** Adolpho stated, "Well, I know for one thing, they expect me to be a hard-ass worker because I am Mexican. I don't think they see me as an intelligent person though." Benedicto commented, "At school, I guess I mean a lot of times, I guess we were looked down upon, you know." Abram noted, "I never looked at anybody as a dominant person because then I would be looking at them as a god, right. I'm just as happy over here and as you're happy over there." Fabricio stated, "Well, honestly I get

harassed a lot. When people get to know me, they're like, 'Wow, this guy is so such a nice guy, he's such a sweet guy, he cares.'” Carlos stated,

I found out how very difficult it is having an immigrant background. It is really difficult with a certain amount of education. So being Mexican American and a gang member is difficult, but having a gang member label or a criminal background is a lot more difficult and really bad.

**Textural Theme 1: Gang culture—respect, identity, loyalty, and acceptance.**

Several participants described the life events that led them to join a gang at a young age and how respect, identity, loyalty, and acceptance are key components in the gang culture. Abram stated the following about respect:

That was my dream. At 8 years old, I used to see the writings on the walls because I grew up in some housing projects, and I used to see writing all over the wall. My desire already was not to be a school teacher or a policeman or a fireman. I said, “I am going to be a gang member.”

Abram also stated,

Ranking out means like if anybody ever asks you what gang you're from, you better say the neighborhood you're from, whether they have a gun to your head, whether it was 10 on one. So that was instilled in us because if you did it and the gang members from your gang found out that you said that you're not from no gang, then you're going to be dealt with anyway.

Abram explained the following about respect:

A lot of times, people, they look at Mexican Americans, especially gang members that are aggressive or I mean this is just in us, you know. I like people to—I like

to have respect, but I like to give respect too. But during that time before I became a—started working here, my thing was I've always wanted respect from my homeboys and I wanted to be known, I wanted to get a name for myself, I wanted them to know that hey, you know, when you hear my name, that hey he's a good homeboy, he is down and he is solid. I wanted them to know that. So, I guess that's part of being machismo or trying to show that type of character.

Still talking about respect, Abram stated, "They gave me everything. I mean I had a lot of stuff: cars, women, alcohol, drugs, money, jewelry."

Carlos said the following about respect: "I was getting like this little reputation. First, there was a sense of belonging and empowerment, like somehow empowered, like fame." Adolpho mentioned that respect is "who makes the most money, who sleeps with the most females, who does the most drugs or who can drink the most without getting drunk and who can shoot as many people." Michael's feelings about respect were as follows: "As you begin to get in trouble and you're building your name little by little and you're getting, you know you're building character, then you start to, you know, people start to admire you."

Benedicto stated the following about respect:

I mean, them having my back as far as you know if it was five of them and one of me and my friends came, it was even, so for them to be there for me made me feel good, you know, and made me feel like I was loved and respected.

Benedicto also discussed identity:

I mean a lot of people growing up see money, women, parties. I mean, people respect them and they want to be part of that they want to be like that. And if

they're coming from a place as far as poverty or not having no money what are you going to want? You're going to want that lifestyle of having money, how do you get that? You enjoy it, you contribute your services as far as I mean, "Can I help you out?" And you end up doing it, because you want to be respected and you want to be out there selling those drugs, making money to be able to put food on your table.

Abram said the following about identity: "I'm not going to bow down to nobody, I'm not going to cry to nobody. We always wanted to make soldiers, like soldiers even if we did life in prison." Fabricio stated the following about loyalty: "I mean, it was everything to me then, like being a gang member, being a Mexican, like even in prison we take good care of our people in there."

Adolpho described his sense of loyalty:

My cousin who was also in my gang, he was older than me, so I've seen his lifestyle. Like I said, the money, the drugs, the women. I've seen the nice car he had, and I was like, I want that. We want to see who makes the most money, who sleeps with the most females, who does the most drugs, or who can drink the most without getting drunk and who can shoot as many people, who can—it was just a competition.

Adolpho stated the following regarding acceptance:

I was doing good at selling drugs, whatever, but I've seen how everything was and I was like—my mom—at that time my mom was just drinking, partying so I was going out whenever I wanted and coming home. She didn't care anymore as long as my sisters were doing good. If she's partying, she don't give a shit. If she

really cared, she should have got a job, but instead me and my sister were paying the bills, that's the way I see it. That money was for me and my sisters, there is child support and that money is supposed to go to our shoes, clothing for me, school supplies. I never got shit: it was going to drugs, partying, paying rent too.

**Textural Theme 2: Criminal behavior—violence, childhood trauma, and machismo-type behaviors.** Adolpho stated the following about violence: “I felt nothing and nothing at that moment and nothing after it had happened.” Michael noted his experienced on violence: “I was drinking, I was so violent. I remember seeing her lose our first baby. She was like 5 months, and she had a miscarriage. She told me, “I’m never going to forgive you for this.”

Fabricio statement on violence was as follows: “This guy is ramming the shit out of her face with his fist like you can see every time he hit her, like blood, like her skin is opening.” Michael made the following statement about violence: “In front of us, he beat my mom up, his own sister, and kicked us out of the house.” Fabricio described the events of his childhood trauma:

They used to hit her a lot like, and I was like why is he hitting her, like are they in a relationship or, it seemed like they were like couple, they used to act like arguing and it reminded me like when my mom and my dad used to argue, so that would happen with my uncle, and my mom used to argue, and then I will see my uncle slapping her, and hitting her, and pulling her by the hair, and dragging her. I mean, I couldn't do nothing about it. I used to see them doing a lot drugs, and my mom would hop in the car and she will come out different, and then my uncle, it was just a lot of stuff.



My father would hit me like if I was a like an older man. He would punch me, literally punch me like nonstop. He will hammer me in the face.

I would curse him, and I don't give a fuck. "Why now you want to come in my life? You left, you fucking, you mother fucking wino. You would drink, and you would hit my mom," I would tell him all that, and then I'll be crying, but I'll be not crying like, I'll be crying like anger, like I was angry, and I would break the windows. I remember, I'll break all my house windows. I will get so angry that I will sometime, there was one other time that I flood the house with water.

Adolpho described machismo type behaviors:

These guys cry at night, and nobody can hear them, these guys are facing life, they're never going to get out, and they're kids, they're young, and I feel bad, I feel bad for these kids.

I think about my son, I think about my nephews like I couldn't imagine them going, and being in jail, because being in jail it's hard. You can't show weakness, and you cannot put your head down, and be like I want my mom now, because they'll be like, they'll make fun of you, and they'll be on you.

Adolpho stated the following about machismo type behaviors: "The only things that I would express to like a female that I was with is I love you, and I miss you. That was it. I wouldn't tell her I'm scared." Abram stated, "There ain't no way we are going to back down for nobody. We're the baddest." Adolpho stated, "Mexican American—being a man, especially Mexican; being real into being dominant; being violent physical; that's who we are."

**Textural Theme 3: Family culture—violence, physical neglect, and abandonment.** Adolpho described family violence at home: “Slapped me, pinched me, throw things at me, hit me with a, what is that, clothes hanger wire or the antenna, the antenna of a cheap-ass TV so she would break it off the TV.” Adolpho described feelings of neglect and abandonment:

I was doing good at selling drugs, whatever, but I’ve seen how everything was and I was like—my mom—at that time my mom was just drinking, partying, so I was going out whenever I wanted and coming home. She didn’t care anymore, as long as my sisters were doing good. Like, you don’t have to worry about me I’ll do my own thing. You go on and take care of yourselves, don’t worry about me.

I was never home, I was always out there partying and whatnot, so I was like, then if she’s partying, she don’t give a shit. If she really cared, she should have got a job but instead she was—me and my sister were paying the bills, that’s the way I see it. That money was for me and my sisters, there is child support and that money is supposed to go to our shoes, clothing for me, school supplies. I never got shit, so it’s, like, it was going to drugs, partying, paying rent too, but she was paying out of my child support check like you are our mother, you know? I lost respect for her when we were really young, and I knew what it was all about, like, “Come on man, you are the mother. If you had us, you are supposed to take care of us until we come of age.”

**Textural Theme 4: Emotions—anger, sadness, and repressed feelings.**

Fabricio described the emotions of anger, sadness, and repressed feeling growing up:

My family, they were like me growing up, all I seen was like a lot of violence, like me living in a house, like when my dad went to prison, like everybody would be drinking, fighting. I used to see like blood like all the time. Gunshots. I remember I used to be picking up the gun shells, and I used to keep them because I used to play with them. I used to pick up the cigarette butts, like I seen a lot of stuff, people getting killed.

I build like a lot of anger and a lot of resentments towards my dad, because I can still remember him like even before he went to prison, when he used to drink. He used to drink himself to, he will be in the, I mean it's little stuff that I could remember. I try not to like I go back, I mean I don't feel nothing, but sometimes I get angry, I'm like man, how come me growing up, how come I couldn't do this or this, and I was like, it just started going through my head, and I just don't really like to remember all that.

Fights with different individuals, my uncles or their friends or my mom's blood, because my uncles, they were real violent towards my mom. They used to hit her a lot. I was like why is he hitting her, like are they in a relationship or, it seemed like they were like couple, they used to act like arguing, like when my mom and my dad used to argue, so that would happen with my uncle, and my mom used to argue, and then I will see my uncle slapping her, and hitting her, and pulling her by the hair, and dragging her. I mean, I couldn't do nothing about it. My sister was young. She couldn't even walk yet, but me, and my older brother,

like we wouldn't do nothing. My brother will cover himself up, and I would just be like in the corner, and I don't know, it was weird, and I don't have that type of relationship with my mom, now that, I mean, I would love to like I will sit down with her, and I would tell her, "Hey mom, remember? I remember when my uncle used to hit you, and slap you, and you'll be drunk, and he'll be drunk, and like hey, what was that all about?" I just, I don't think that's ever going to happen because I don't want to bring it up.

**Textural Theme 5: Dominant culture—discrimination, prejudice, and police harassment.** Abram described feeling discrimination and prejudice:

The only time I got mad when I was falsely accused of stealing. But it wasn't even by a White person. It was by a Black dude and I guess another Mexican dude. I was dressed, you could tell I was a gang member and I had my tattoos on me at that time.

Abram stated,

I mean, my tattoos, like they, I would just imagine it, like, "Oh God, this guy has a lot of tattoos," or even though, I mean the police they, I get pulled over all the time. I get harassed a lot. They want to find something on me they, they think I am carrying drugs, or weapons or I have, because I'm not on parole, I don't have nothing, I don't have no parole, I don't have no probation, I'm nothing, I'm clean. They strip my car down, they open the hood, they open the trunk they take out the tire and they, you know, how the car, they try to lift the plastic stuff on the car."

Yeah, and I tell them, "Hey man, you guys, what are you guys doing? Man, you guys are doing this for nothing man, you know." "Oh, we're just, you

know, doing our job you know.” I do sometimes, I do get mad, you know. I’m like, I do sometimes get attitude, but it’s not worth it, you know. So I just go along. I just go along, yes sir, no sir, you know, I’m not on parole, I’m not on probation.

If I give them that attitude like, that good attitude, you know, sometimes they just run my name, and they’re just like okay have a nice day, but I’ve seen it when I give them attitude, they give me the same attitude, and it makes it worse. I just let them do what they got to do.

Carlos stated that he felt discrimination, prejudice and police harassment:

When I was little, and I moved to the West Side, then I experienced the language barrier, different cultures, and racist remarks, and maybe the illegal search and seizure and false imprisonment, White ways of doing things, like somehow them knowing too that we didn’t speak English, there’s nothing we could do or they already know we couldn’t complain, they already know that, they couldn’t intimidate us within INS [Immigration and Naturalization Service] right, so they went around their own program without doing things legally, so I already sensed that dominant culture in that way, and with especially them being from a different race, like just they didn’t want us in that area in the neighborhood. I think they did it for intimidation, and being from a different race, like just they didn’t want us in that area in the neighborhood.

Michael also stated he felt discrimination and prejudice:

“Ah, you’re a wetback or your grandparents are a wetbacks,” or this and that. It’s the same with any race that wasn’t basically, you could say, created here. I mean,

this state was built by immigrants for people who try to like stereotype different cultures and different ethnicities\_or I don't know how you say that word. I don't see White people would try to characterize us as people who would want to steal from you or people who would want to try to—how can you say it—drunkards or drug addicts or gang members or we're not all the same. You know we're not all. . . . There's bad in everybody and our culture, as far as growing up here, being Mexican, was always, "Oh, you're a beaner or you're a wetback."

Benedicto alluded to feeling discriminated against and prejudice:

Yeah, so I would love to have a nice little mansion and have my family being there, but my things that get to me are that I can't even go and get an apartment because they want to check my background. I don't have problem with checking my background, the only thing is that they will say, oh well, you know because I have a lot of drug sales. I have a lot drug sales, I have drugs possessions. I had terrorist threats, robbery, vandalism, I have., you know what I mean, I have assault and battery on a peace officer, resisting arrest, domestic violence. Now I just got a domestic violence not too long ago.

**Textural Theme 6: Restricted emotionality—power and dominance, difficulty with relationships, and fear of femininity.** Benedicto described his experience with power and dominance, difficulty with relationships and fear of femininity:

First person I ever punched, punched, was the girl I was with before the one I'm with now. I felt bad, I felt really bad. I mean, at first it gave me a satisfaction of, "All right you know what, see I told you, don't push me, don't get me to that

point, don't act like that," I mean, "because this is the reaction that you are going to get" or "Don't say that, because this is the reaction you are going to get and I've told you from beginning not to act like that and you still did." I mean, "Don't put your hands on me, and look at the reaction you got." I feel bad then, I mean because I wouldn't consider myself a woman beater. I mean and I have never been like that you know, I was never like that, but it seems to me like I'm going to turn up put the blame on people, but they brought the worst out in me. Benedicto also stated, "I wouldn't cry in front of people. I always try to be this, say, strong person to where not to show emotions to other people."

Michael described his power and dominance over women, difficulty with relationships and fear of femininity:

Well, my uncle probably started hitting my mom right there in front of us while she was in bed. I've been in jail three times for domestic violence. Trying to defend myself, trying to—all I was doing is what I saw, you know, that was just the way I was. I had seen it resolve. Grandma did it, my uncle did it, and you just don't think. You know, all your anger, all you know is you just fight back, and it ain't with words, you know, it's both. But yeah, it's amazing how like they say, "Monkey see and monkey do" and "it's just you do what you see." I would hear that she would do something and as soon as I would hear, you know, she would want to fight back, and my way of coming back was, you know, either hit or that's just the way, punched her with a closed fist. There's been a few times I went to jail for it.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

### **IQ 1: What Does It Mean to Be a Mexican American Male?**

The primary goal of this study was to determine whether male Mexican American gang members demonstrated a greater degree of restricted emotionality associated with a higher propensity toward violence. This response revealed a high frequency of early childhood trauma that indicated the existence of a propensity toward aggression and violence in adulthood (Sansone, Leung, & Wiederman, 2013). As young boys, the participants experienced severe corporal punishment and witnessed a high frequency of family violence, anger, discrimination childhood trauma, abandonment, and physical neglect. These experiences are associated with future partner violence and a disposition toward high aggression and violence when substance abuse is present (Sansone et al., 2013).

Sansone et al. (2013) conducted a study with 342 participants and found that 42.7% ( $n = 146$ ) had witnessed violence in early childhood. The data in this study included 32 instances of family violence. The finding of 28 instances of physical neglect was substantiated with Sansone et al.'s findings of 14.9% ( $n = 51$ ) of participants who reported physical neglect. Consequently, these young men had early experiences of violence in their homes and neglect by their parents that resulted in the inability to trust and to modulate affect, repressed feelings, and extreme hypermasculine behaviors that led to joining a gang. The young men were socialized through early childhood experiences and the subculture of gangs to be tough, callous, and fearless and to develop traits of extreme masculinity and impulsivity, which are characteristics found to be associated with aggression and violence.



This researcher further examined the masculine role conflict associated with restricted emotionality, machismo, aggression, and violence in a gang subculture. The themes developed throughout the interview process of these young men indicated with certainty the magnitude of gender role conflict that exists in the subculture of male gangs. These men developed a callous masculinity and a veneer of toughness that was essential to confront the levels of poverty, daily oppression, limited opportunities, and disadvantaged social status. According to studies on environmental stress, ceaseless exposure leads to serious health conditions. A sense of powerlessness, social disorientation, and isolation exists in impoverished environments (Stodolska, Shinew, Acevedo, & Roman, 2013). Moralistic panic subsists in dominant cultures for groups of people who differ racially from the mainstream culture; therefore, minorities are consigned to live in improvised barrios or ghettos (Duran, 2009). Thus, a physical separation and a differential of power exists, and individuals who are aware of the collective unfairness decide to fight back to gain social position and status. The struggle for recognition asserts itself through organized groups that band together to represent the race, the culture, and the community. A race with determination faced with calamity and opposition continues to move forward. Carlos stated the following about cultural thinking: "To me it means being a man, especially Mexican being real into being dominant, being violent, physical, that's who we are." It is understandable to form other perspectives or strong opinions of these men and label them antisocial with severe psychopathy. As a researcher, I needed to see beyond the scope of the object by placing myself in the sphere of the object to understand and sense its humanity. It provided this researcher with a deeper understanding of their lived experiences, the rationality, and the

culture of the persona that exploded with a rich history of relations. The researcher questioned her objectives, motives, and judgments and whether they were any different from the dominant culture that cast the judicial vote and robbed the adolescents of their lives through imprisonment. The stories shared opposed the nature of the researcher's education in human behavior and diagnostic labels. These men represented a full spectrum of exaggerated masculinity, including anger, hatred, wife beating, stabbing, killing; however, left alone in the darkness of their cells, they were neglected and abandoned boys once again. According to Oransky and Fisher (2009), societal norms prescribe acceptable male behavior in the public and private sectors. Even in prison, the young adolescent learns quickly to repress his tears and emotions and demonstrate he is a formidable foe and rival. The external character represented to others is a prideful, stoic soldier and a murderer for the gang, thus negating any feminine characteristics that can indicate he is less than a man.

## **IQ 2: What Were Your Experiences of Sadness and Anger?**

The sadness and anger response illustrated the internalized experiences of the young men who learned through social competence to regulate sadness and suppress their feelings. Consequently, they are not able to receive empathy or support from friends or family during a period of sadness or emotional distress. In essence, they regulate their emotions poorly, and they lack healthy empathetic responses of others in pain. They learn to externalize aggressive behaviors and display social incompetence (Rivers, Brackett, Katulak, & Salovey, 2007). Most men have learned through societal norms not to describe feelings of sadness; therefore, failing to learn appropriate verbal and emotional communication essentially perpetuates more sadness that develops into rage.

Research on regulating emotions has indicated no gender differences exist in how men and women express their emotions. A differential occurs in emotion-related situations that arise or when inequality of power exists (Timmers, Fischer, & Manstead, 1998).

### **IQ 3: What Were Your Experiences With Accepting Dominant Cultural Norms and Expectations?**

This response indicated how the young men experienced the inequalities of the dominant culture and the subtle social and psychological underpinnings of discrimination in human culture. The young men were Mexican American, members of a subculture of gangs, socially disadvantaged, and from a low socioeconomic status. They joined gangs to replace the family they never had to fulfill aspirations and desires of being loved, accepted, acknowledged as men, and valuable as human beings. Mexican Americans face difficult socialization issues starting at a very young age with the attached minority label. Adolescence is a stage of autonomy and self-expression. Non-White, minority, Mexican Americans are socialized and identified as powerless, pigeonholed, and nonintellectual. They are discriminated against for social inferiority in a dominant culture.

According to Phinney and Chavira (1995), Parrillo identified several possible behaviors for Mexican American adolescents to use to respond to discrimination: (a) defiance, in which individuals confront the discriminatory practice; (b) deviance, in which individuals engage in unacceptable behaviors that violate laws and norms of the dominant culture; (c) avoidance, in which individuals cope with the discrimination by ignoring it or confronting the perpetrator; and (d) acceptance, which occurs when individuals conform to and accept the norms of the discriminatory group. Despite racial

discrimination, social issues of poverty, and stereotyping, the men learned adaptive ways of coping. Abram stated, “I’m just as happy over here and as you’re happy over there.”

### **Explanation of Conceptual Map**

The purpose of the map is to demonstrate the integration and interrelationships of the male gang member and the dynamics that occur in the development of his identity with his family, gang, and society. The map depicts how an active social recognition as the words of respect and self identity are important in forming the integration of a collective identification within the family or group. Resulting in the internal unconscious desire of the individual to serve and commit to the gang organization or family.

The following brief detail of Figure 1 represents the pathway of the unconscious of intentionality, that leads an adolescent to undertake criminality and inevitably his choice of joining a gang. Additional detailed information on the six main themes appears following the figure.

Starting in the middle of the chart where all things begin in the family. The main family culture theme is composed of the following subthemes that include family violence, abandonment, and neglect. As children, these young men were exposed to a lifestyle of domestic violence, fights, and altercations with family members. Additionally, their environment laden with drug addicts, alcoholics, drug sales, gang members, killing, prostitution, and poverty is the daily norm. A modeled behavior of violence, they were socialized to and accustomed. They observe other young men in their early teens with cars, money, drugs, and women. Consequently, the only way out of poverty and changing the circumstances of their lives is through the pathway of intentionality (demonstrated on the chart). However, it led them to adopting criminal

behavior to achieve the ultimate status of being a gang member. Abram said, "At the age of 8 years old I knew I did not want to be a teacher, policeman or a fireman, I wanted to be a gang member." Usually, the criminal lifestyle begins at the age of 8 or 10 years old doing favors or running errands (such as drugs or weapons) for a gang organization. They are called the gang-wannabes and at times referred as the little killers (as explained by Abram). At the age of 12 or 13 years, old they are initiated into the gang membership through an old gang ritual called jumped in. Each gang member in the circle physically beats the young adolescent circled by some gang members' ages ranging from 13 to 25 years old. If he survives the ordeal, he becomes an official gang member. At the level of a gang member his intention and gain, whether it was a conscious or unconscious desire, is to be respected and have self identity never experienced in his family culture. He experiences loyalty and acceptance by the gang family, in essence, the gang family is more important than his biological family. In this new family, he experiences empathy for others and develops psychological relationships with other gang members. These relationships form through shared experiences of criminal behavior that included violence, childhood trauma, and machismo behavior. The violence they share together defending their neighborhood from rebel gangs creates a strong bond and a sense of camaraderie as they give their lives for one another and the gang. They also share with one another their stories and experiences of early child trauma. They hold a collective consciousness of what it means to be Mexican American male meaning physically violent and machismo men.

Their shared experiences included the internal voice of the family that denigrated them and called them worthless, good for nothing and that they will turn out just like

their fathers in prison. Then the external voice of the dominant culture stated, you are good for nothing, you are a criminal a gang member, a Mexican, a wetback, and will always be a criminal. The external voice supports and substantiates what was heard all their lives as children and now it said again by the dominant culture and society. Their mind perceives; I am good for nothing, worthless, and will never amount to anything. Consequently, their emotions of anger are externalized as a result of repressed sadness and feelings. The relationships they develop with people become restricted in expression and primarily focused on power and dominance over women or weaker men. They have difficulty with relationships usually they are unable to maintain close intimacy because of the anger and fear of femininity – that they will become weak for expressing their feelings and vulnerability.

### **Theme 1: Gang Culture**

The main theme of gang culture is represented by the following subthemes that include respect, identity, loyalty, and acceptance. The subthemes become the generalized social representations of the thematic pattern expressed through their responses. Thus, respect and identity are unconscious desires to be accepted and recognized as an equal in a group. The individual desires to see oneself, as an equal to others this experience defined as respect. The subthemes of loyalty and acceptance are developed through empathy and psychological relations fostered through shared experiences such as criminal behavior and acts of violence in defense of the gang. These shared experiences include memories of family violence, childhood trauma, abandonment, and neglect. The subculture of gang members maintain a collective conscious of machismo behavior,



As children, the young men did not develop a sense of dignity, belonging, or respect. The absence of family socialization and interaction commonly found in the dominant culture was due to low economic stabilization that influenced the young boys who felt unsupported and neglected to participate in gangs. Thus, the biological family was substituted with gang members who provided food, clothing, love, support, and a sense of purpose and respect. It is human nature to seek relationships with others and to become a member of a group. In a gang community setting, the young men learned about themselves and what defined them as social human beings; whether the interaction was passive or aggressive, it contributed to the achievement of social status and competence.

Respect and dignity are important elements to any human being. Respect can be an act of kindness or recognition of another person's views and beliefs. Dignity is an inherent value that results from respect that a person has value to self and others.

Due to neglect, the young men never developed an integrated sense of self in their early childhood. Abandonment, absence of a father in their home life, and minimal expression of maternal love are common causes. They lacked maturity in the developmental stages of early childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood to form a cohesive sense of self. Consequently, they joined a gang to develop a sense of value and integration as a young male. As human beings, we all identify with our families or people we admire and want to model the same behavior. Humans aspire at an early age through intrinsic values to model their success in business and parenting and to be responsible citizens in the community. Therefore, the desire to aspire and be like one's role model is imprinted early in humans' development. These young men are not too different from the rest of humanity, who want to achieve success and accomplishment.



The differential lies in the manner how these young men obtained success and money it is usually through nefarious methods and not through moral excellence and honest work.

According to Bandura (1985, p. 415), the socialization process begins with the first interaction between an individual and his or her family. The behavior modeled is learned and replicated throughout the lifespan of the individual. Disturbing behavior strengthens through peer interaction, school, community contacts, and other sources of influence into which the individual has been socialized. Thus, social interaction with gang members and a lifestyle of aggressive behaviors is the norm of the group and the camaraderie of loyalty that reinforces disturbing and illegal behavior.

James (2001) explained that cognitive development involves a series of processes that take place over time. The individual learns to discern between objects and the combination of circumstances at a given moment. Consequently, the process of loyalty from a cognitive stance is complex and takes time. Loyalty involves volition (the desire to freely dedicate oneself to another or to a particular cause or belief), cognitive complexity (the process by which people learn or think about a specific situation or object), and resistance to change (behavioral consistency). The decision of loyalty is developed through observation and time, knowing that the particular object demonstrated consistency and commitment; thus, being persuaded to leave the object or group would be unacceptable.

The nature of loyalty developed in juvenile delinquency underlies the predictive lack of a parental regime and supervision, and adolescents develop loyalty toward groups that demonstrate support and care. In essence, loyalty to the gang to end the deprived

lifestyle becomes the only systematic approach to achieving wealth and status and to getting out of the disadvantaged, low socioeconomic lifestyle.

Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that the loyalty experienced by the young men would be easily delegated to criminal adaptations rather than to following parental guidelines or modeling appropriate behavior. A strong alliance to gang membership and a familial gang lifestyle is significantly evident in poor and deprived neighborhoods. The gang lifestyle is often the only alternative to acquiring amenities such as a sense of belonging, acceptance, feeling loved, and protection. Thus, material and personal needs are gained through acts of loyalty and obedience to lessen the burden of poverty.

Acceptance comes with the recognition that one's family is not emotionally or physically vested in the welfare of the family. In the interview, Adolpho described feeling uncared for and not accepted like his sisters were by his mother. He mentioned that his survival and basic needs depended on him. Consequently, acceptance of who he was as a person was found outside the home in a gang environment.

Adolpho explicated that his mother did not consider his or his sister's need for food and clothing; instead, she used the child support checks to buy drugs and alcohol and sometimes to pay for the rent. Early childhood is typically a period of learning and modeling positive and socially acceptable behavior. Instead, Adolpho as a child observed substance abuse, late-night parties, and a mother who was both emotionally and physically absent. Thus, the process of perception and cognition were accentuated, and the child conceptualized that he was not worthy of love and acceptance.

Adolpho mentioned that he did not care what his mother did because he was also enjoying his life with parties and coming home when he wanted. Many men in prison

share the same familial culture that includes a lack of supervision, insecure attachment, severe neglect, and lack of respect. Most of these men (participants) experienced in early childhood insecure attachment, thus they process cognitive information, with minimal or no affect. Any affect demonstrated is usually not regulated or controlled by cognition and unmoderated (Crittenden, Partridge, & Claussen, 1991). While Adolpho was still very young, he knew the value of education and continued to attend high school despite the odds against him. He grasped that his only hope was that education would someday help him turn his life around.

There are many theoretical explanations for the theory of male self identity. For example, psychoanalytic research asserts that young male children need to observe a male figure who will serve as a teacher and a wise counselor (Blazina & Watkins, 2000). The objective is to help young boys to escape and survive the encroachments of motherly affection and love and be independent of feminine influence. Other researchers, such as Greenson, emphasized that the need to develop masculine characteristics was to disengage completely from the mother and identify only with the father (Blazina & Watkins, 2000). Other psychoanalytical studies indicated the value of the father's role was to be complementary: the objective was (a) to persuade the child away from the mother slowly, (b) to provide moral support to prevent further captivity by the mother, and (c) to provide a space without the influence of the mother.

Blazina and Watkins (2000) noted psychology theories such as object relations and self-psychology both supported the notion that a young man needed to separate from his mother. Failure to separate from the maternal bond would produce a fragile and fragmented sense of self.

Research indicates that most young men have experienced a childhood filled with mother's warmth and loving direction. Thus, the process of disidentification and separating boys from maternal love is reasonable to facilitate the entrance into manhood. The reverse was strongly evident in the lives of the Mexican American participants whose lives were traumatized from early development. As a result of early traumas, they lacked the ability to interpret a situation; thus, without a point of reference for modeling appropriate conduct, the result is emotional dysregulation. According to Yates (2004), early trauma results in deficiencies in cognitive integration. The vulnerability to splitting is highly probable, as the individual is not able to negotiate between affect control and integration and thus will process a quarrel as a threat. In essence, the men never adopted effective ways to manage affect or to use cognitive reappraisal to reevaluate a situation.

## **Theme 2: Criminal Behavior**

The main theme criminal behavior was supported through acts of violence, childhood trauma, and machismo-type behaviors; the historical events referred to their shared experiences of physical abuse and victimization in familial relationships. Sharing experiences creates a sense of belonging, being understood, and feeling accepted by others (see Figure 1). Mahar, Cobio, and Stuart (2013) contended that the nature of humanity is not isolated; therefore, the adoption of companionship or a sense of belonging to a community or a group is essential. Mahar et al. addressed the research of Hagerty, who demonstrated the need to feel part of the group or system through two prongs: (a) valued involvement or the experience of being valued and needed" and (b) fit the person's perception that his or her characteristics articulate with or complement the system or environment. Thus, repeated exposure to family violence, neglect, and

abandonment develops into attachment anxiety, which is depicted as fear of abandonment and manifests as attachment avoidance or a fear of closeness.

Children who experience repeated traumatic events early in life will experience psychological problems later in life that exacerbate the symptoms of PTSD (Kendra, Bell, & Guimond, 2012). The young men internalized years of chronic violence in their homes and were socialized culturally to believe that violence was the norm and standard in a relationship with the opposite sex. Consequently, their anger-arousal state and sense of threat were overly heightened and they were not able mitigate between cognitions and proper affect to soothe and normalize their behavior. For example, when suppressed anger becomes aroused toward a woman, the anger is externalized, and the female is objectified as a form to control and master. According to Benjamin (1998), the disowned maternal body is objectified, profaned, treated irreverently, denigrated, defamed, and demoralized sexually.

These men were socialized by a social culture that dominates women through males modeling hegemonic masculinity. Rage and hatred toward women are an aspect of their social identity and retaliation against the maternal figure or hatred turned toward self. The rage toward women may be an endeavor to rid themselves of any feminine nature in the context of their masculinity.

During the interview process, the researcher heard the regrets and shame that these men feel regarding their participation in the cultural construction of traditional masculinity. Their life stories revealed an unconscious hegemonic portrayal of masculinity that was in direct opposition to the loving and respected maternal figure and Madonna. They unconsciously hold the maternal figure culpable for the absence of the

father and for their hatred of both parents and self. These young men all have the same repetitive history of neglect and abandonment and were left to survive on their own. In essence, the experience of these young men through economic marginality, discrimination, historical trauma, deprivation, and a lack of maternal bond led to their masculinity and antisocial behavior. Conceptual and theoretical work is necessary regarding how the process of historical trauma, violence, and neglect affect the beliefs and perceptions of a child and on the continuum life span of the individual.

The years of violence, aggression, and abuse left deep wounds that never healed, and the young men continued to overcome and regulate their emotions through anger management, exercise, work, and meditation. It was difficult to listen to the stories of a young child witnessing his mother being physically assaulted by his uncle or his father. The child was too young to understand what occurred, and he felt helpless and terrified. Thus, the young men lost all mechanisms of trust in humanity due to their early life experiences of aggression and violence. Schore (2001) pointed to the work of Bowlby, who suggested that in order to understand the developmental process of a child, the process needs to be understood as an object with mutual reciprocity and unusual genetic qualities under the given circumstances. Bowlby proposed that an infant or child's environment of adaptiveness has important effects that influence and are vital to the survival of the child. The attachment bond between the infant or child and his or her mother is essentially the determiner of the infant or child's ability to cope with stress, which directly develops the area of the brain that is able to regulate affect.

The young men did not experience a secure attachment in early childhood; consequently, they restricted their feelings and deep painful emotions. They resorted to

repressing their emotional pain through self-medicating with alcohol or substance abuse. Additionally, a cyclical process developed in their childhood continued into the next generation. These young men, like their fathers, had a history of aggression, domestic violence, alcohol abuse, and marital conflict. The risk for their offspring to be aggressive and turn to criminality is potentially high unless these men learn how to regulate their emotions to develop appropriate ways to communicate with their spouses and family.

### **Theme 3: Family Culture**

The main theme of family culture included violence, neglect, and abandonment, which the individuals internalized and suppressed. The young men developed strong friendships with other young men with similar backgrounds as they shared personal experiences and memories of family violence, neglect, and abandonment. Their shared experiences formulated group cohesion, camaraderie, and a meaningful and supportive environment. All human beings desire to be loved, to connect, and to live with dignity and respect. When these elements are missing from the life of a young child, the primitive instincts of aggression and violence overdevelop, which leads to antisocial behavior. Maiello (2001) noted human beings are born with an organic need and qualities for meeting the other and developing a connection with that person. Maiello acknowledged Trevarthen, who described the phenomenon of primary intersubjectivity as an internal desire to connect with the feeling and interests of others. The emphasis of gang organizations is forming a strong bond and using teamwork to operate at the level of respect, loyalty, camaraderie, and against the rival gang.

#### **Theme 4: Emotions**

The combination of anger and repressed sadness and feelings led the participants to develop negative emotions and perceptions. These perceptions were reinforced by old internalized thought patterns and beliefs, such as *I am worthless* or *I am good for nothing, just like my father*. Cohn, Seibert, and Zeichner (2009) explained that anger expressed over an extended period of time will appear more often, be more volatile, and be sustained for a longer period, thereby increasing the risk of violence.

The young men's life experience as young boys was framed with minimal or no emotional detachment. They developed a rigid masculinity and were socialized to despise and hate any behavior that would appear feminine. Consequently, the young men developed restricted emotionality. They had difficulty disclosing their emotions or felt uncomfortable with the emotional expression of others. O'Neil (1981b) noted that the men had been socialized to devalue women, and any expression viewed as feminine constituted weakness that provoked further anger. Additionally, the young men experienced depression because they kept their unexpressed feelings and emotions deeply concealed, and those repressed emotions often appeared as anger and violence. The men experienced psychological distress due to the repetitive performance of rigid behaviors proscribed to traditional masculinity (Mahalik, 1999).

Although, maladaptive patterns were established these emotions that are deeply guarded in the unconscious perceptions, and beliefs can be disrupted when a person is motivated to make a conscious change in the perception of negative beliefs. Men who adhere to rigid traditional masculinity are predisposed to gender role conflict, which heightens hostility and violence in men (Cohn et al., 2009). The young men who were



exposed to domestic violence, gang wars, and highly traumatic situations from an early age developed maladaptive cognitions. Problems with emotion regulation are associated with negative thoughts, a dysfunctional demeanor, and expressive suppression. Fabricio stated, “Then I see my uncle slapping her, and hitting her, and pulling her by the hair, and dragging her.” As children, the young men lived in low socioeconomic neighborhoods with prostitutes, drug dealers, and addicts; they also experienced victimization in their own homes. They developed poor cognitive reappraisal because of high stress, maladaptive cognitions, and hyperarousal symptoms (similar to PTSD) that mediated behavioral problems.

### **Theme 5: Dominant Culture**

The discrimination, prejudice, and police harassment subthemes illustrated external voices of condemnation, such as *you will be a criminal forever* and *you are worthless and good for nothing*. Further confirming what they heard as children, the internalized voice of condemnation from their parents, *you are worthless and good for nothing*. The early life experiences of the six participants were challenged with pervasive stigmas: low socioeconomic status, minority, and devalued as the other. Their social cognitions led to low self-esteem, negative thoughts, poor social competence, and poor attitudes toward parents and authority. The impact of racial prejudice and hostility appears as somatic and mental health problems, such as depression and violence. Mexican American males are stigmatized and labeled as non-White with undesirable characteristics such as anger, past criminal records, and a high risk for violence. During their adolescent years, the participants were stereotyped and labeled as criminals, and the constant barrage helped to direct their behavior toward criminality. Homant and

Kennedy (1982) stated stereotyping and labeling results in the person accepting and internalizing the perceptions and discrimination of the dominant culture.

Chow, Ricciardelli, and Cain (2012) contended that stigmatization can come through association, friendship, or blood relationships with those with criminal records. A myriad of challenges such as finding gainful employment with prison records isolates them further from society and may result in another statistic for recidivism. They suffer from being stereotyped as lazy, unintelligent, undependable, and machismo, words that are prejudicial and denigrating to any culture. Some of the prejudices these young men experience are the result of negative attitudes of not only the dominant White culture but also other Mexican Americans, often with lighter skin and an education, who have accepted the spurious overgeneralization of prejudice by the dominant culture. Patterson (2014) noted that a state of separation exists because the human tendency is to “conform to group norms and ingroup members” (p. 253). The out-group, which consists of people who are different from the in-group, are not welcomed. Consequently, the out-group is discriminated against because the culture and appearances are not adaptable to the in-group representation. During the interview, Benedicto expressed concern regarding how easily people are categorized, which leads to erroneous concepts and prejudice that all Mexicans are beaners and drunkards. In other words, all Mexican Americans are the same without any redeeming qualities or differentiation.

Benedicto stated, “This state was built by immigrants.” Native Americans originally populated the United States, and then the Europeans and others came to conquer and take the lands. In essence, Benedicto was saying that everyone in the United

States is a foreigner, and no one is 100% any particular ethnicity; everyone is a composition of different ethnicities, races, and cultures.

Carlos's experience of inferiority as a small child was devastating, and he was frightened to know that his parents who did not know English were vulnerable and defenseless to the tirades of the police. Discrimination and prejudice exist everywhere, and often it is subtle. Most Mexican immigrants when they first arrive in the United States encounter antagonism from the dominant culture due to personal judgments, fears and prejudice that immigrants tax the system or take away jobs. This form of antagonism against minority groups results in higher incidents of aggression and psychological degradation within minority groups. It is only a matter of time until individuals turn their anger against themselves or others. These young men made many mistakes in life and paid their debt to society. Consequently, we need to model good morals and teach them to be good, responsible citizens, and leaders of communities.

#### **Theme 6: Restricted Emotionality**

The main theme of restricted emotionality is endorsed by the subthemes of power, dominance, difficulty with relationships, and fear of femininity. This theme of restricted emotionality (RE) portrays their relations between people, their view of their world and their interaction with others. Researchers agree that socialization is multidimensional and occurs on many levels: culturally, in family beliefs, in peer influence, and in societal expectations. O'Neil et al. (1995) noted that gender role conflict is an intricate, complex, and evolving concept of scripted roles learned through cultural values and beliefs, class, age, and the life experiences of an individual. Accordingly, gender role conflict is premised on the belief that men experience an affective state of disturbance that proceeds

from an unconscious emotional wound centered on masculine and feminine roles. The young men in this study developed extreme hypermasculinity, deviated from societal norms using their masculinity and violence, and experienced conflict of the real sense of self-concept and the ideal self-concept (O'Neil et al., 1995).

The young men had been socialized and masculinized through subcultural gang norms and family violence to potentiate a disposition of anger, restricted emotionality, fearlessness, and dominance and were trained to respond to provocation violently. Levant et al. (2006) contended that the propensity of men who have immature affect coping skills is to transform their fragile emotions into aggression and react with anger when hurt. Thus, the predisposition of restricted emotionality in the young men anticipates psychological distress in interpersonal relationships and trauma that is reenacted and aroused through anger. The young men's insecure attachment style prohibits any modulation of arousal of anger due to the inability to self regulate. Consequently, the theory of attachment may be a precursor to the underdeveloped and inconsistent emotion coping strategies found in men socialized to aggression.

Weinfield, Ogawa, and Sroufe (1997) suggested that childhood attachment history is most pertinent in anticipating social competence when individuals have an interest in their social world and a support system in place. The researcher did not examine in detail the childhood history of the six participants, but it would be fair to say that most of the men fall into Ainsworth's model of anxious or avoidant attachment. Weinfield et al. contended the structure of anxious or avoidant attachment represents infants whose initial cries were never soothed or attended. Thus, the infant responds to distress by avoiding

the caregiver (mother), even if help is offered. Caregivers in this level of attachment are often distant and emotionally not present to the infant's needs.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, problems that exist with gang members in high risk areas will not change unless an intervention program can be developed, that employs local citizens, psychologists, social workers and police (Koffman, Ray, Berg, Covington, Albarran, and Vasquez 2009). Where their training provides a holistic approach, that encompasses appropriate instruction in conflict resolution. The intervention program is to create a sense of belonging to former gang members to promote leadership skills, and address social responsibility with emphasizes on problem solving and conflict resolution (Koffman et al., 2009). The program is a means to direct anger, frustrations and give these young men a sense of hope and renewed dignity. The intervention developed is for the purpose of strength building and empowering the individual with social and emotional competence. According to Ohmer (2007) a program that teaches them positive strategies to help other at risk adolescents and in return give these young men a sense of self respect and the true power of manhood. Consequently, it is only through developing an ecological structure to change the circumstances that young boys face in poor communities by forming external supportive structures that include churches, police, neighborhoods, churches, and business to empower and help children and adolescents develop a sense of dignity and self respect (Ohmer, 2007).

Most children develop a sense of self as an important construct in relation to the social environment early in life. Children respond to the stimuli in their environment and learn the appropriate affective response to get the attention they need. They learn the

concept of family loyalty through family interactions and expectations that provide them with a safe feeling of family allegiance, protection, dedication, and love.

According to Leibig and Green (1999) children learn the construct of equity in a family environment, which is the ability to make good choices free from discrimination and judgments. Children also develop the ability to trust and confide in others in the family environment. The constructs of trustworthiness, justice, loyalty, merit, and entitlement are equally exchanged and shared among family members. Leibig and Green (p. 90) posited that Boszormenyi-Nagy and Krasner described this form of relationship as relational ethics. Relational ethics is based on a two-prong concept: “(a) the commitment of the family to meet the individual needs of its members,” and “(b) the responsibility that each family member will preserve the family.”

In a low socioeconomic, dysfunctional family, the development of family loyalty is not remarkable due to the emotional and psychological needs of parents who are not able to transmit the concept of loyalty to their children. The concept of loyalty is inherited through symbolic representations from children’s caregivers. Children learn empathic responses through meaningful experiences that loyalty to the family group is important in the preservation of the group (Leibig & Green, 1999).

The concept of loyalty and self-identity may represent an element that is essential in the development of a child, such as sharing, caring for others, feeling cared for, and achieving respect and acceptance. If the element of loyalty and self-identity is missing in children’s lives, they will seek it outside their family environment to obtain a sense of purpose and stabilization. The impetus to achieve respect, identity, and loyalty by the young men was an internalized mechanism structured in their early childhood

experiences and trauma. The internalized mechanism carried powerful affective and cognitive messages that to overcome childhood neglect and poverty and to achieve success, the only recourse was a lifestyle of crime. In a criminal organization, the young men developed loyalty and gained acceptance through shared experiences and criminal behavior with their gang peers. The young men developed strong psychological relationships through their shared experiences of childhood trauma and family violence. Their criminal experiences of facing the enemy together in combat contributed to the development of their identity, taught them respect and loyalty, and reinforced the cohesion of the gang culture. According to Simon and Grabow (2012), Honneth's recognition theory is based on the societal recognition of human dignity experienced through three factors of respect: (a) acknowledgment in a relationship between two people who have mutual feelings for one another, (b) acknowledgment is a genre of respect embedded in the spheres of interrelationships ruled by the equality principle, and (c) acknowledgment is presented in the form of social revelry and recognition in each other's accomplishments. Thus, respect primarily attests to the perceptual value of the individual that he is recognized among his peers for bravery and loyalty. The perceived recognition of social respect in a gang culture comes through deleterious achievements paid with a high price of repressed emotions, anger, and violence that have further traumatizing effects and mental health problems.

For many years, the young men developed cognitions, schemata, memories, and thoughts delineated with internalized and deeply repressed emotions. The young men blamed their victims for their retaliatory behaviors, used defensive anger projected toward others, and committed violent crimes without remorse. Van der Kolk (1989)

described the work of Pierre Janet, who contended individuals who experienced severe trauma would have cognitive interference with rumination, phobias, and anxiety. Consequently, the young men ruminated over self-worth and experienced a range of restricted affect often concealed through emotional and physical isolation.

Their ruminations are projected toward self-hate that they are not worthy and bad. The sense of not being worthy comes from the internal thoughts of the family culture where they experienced emotional, verbal, and physical abuse and neglect. Their external evidence of unworthiness comes from the dominant culture and the consistent discriminations they experience that continue to stereotype them as criminals (see Figure 1). This type of internalized thinking integrated with the external voice of the dominant culture reinforces criminal, machismo-type behavior that never allows for an integrated sense of self. Consequently, explicit messages received from the dominant culture regarding the importance of self-image in masculinity further support the male gang subculture in maintaining a high profile of the masculine self-concept through media and music that glorifies the macho man as being tough, rugged, hypermasculine, and a gangster. In essence, the fear of appearing feminine for the traditional and extremely masculine man develops from early childhood, when boys are socialized to act tough, not to cry, and not to be a girl. In effect, males have learned to devalue what is feminine and embrace the socialization of emotional suppression and sexism for men. O'Neil (1992) described Jung's work of the anima and animus associated with fear of the feminine. Jung explained that both men and women have masculine and feminine archetypes. These two archetypes bring balance to each gender with varying qualities. The characteristics of tenderness and emotion are represented by the anima in the male



gender, which relates to his initial relationship with his mother: love, attention, holding, and caressing; it is then rejected in manhood in favor of characteristics that repress emotions and antagonize all that is feminine. O'Neil described Maslow's summary of anima:

If he can make peace with his female inside, he can make peace with the females outside, understand them better, be less ambivalent about them, and even admire them more as he realizes how superior their femaleness is to his own much weaker version. (p. 162)

The young men as adolescents embraced the warrior posture, the mask of masculinity, the socialized power of men over women, and hiding emotions. They anchor their manhood through aggression and violence by joining gangs and protecting their neighborhood from perceived enemies. The young men as adolescents resonated with the role of manhood and the proverbial sword to seek, conquer, and take. As young boys, they were taught by their fathers to be strong, not to show emotions, to be fearless in the face of death, and to act like a man in all circumstances. The young men admired role models who were respected in their neighborhood, had acquired wealth, possessed drugs and alcohol, and had an entourage of women. Throughout their lives, the young men lived in solitude and within the walls of poverty that encompass the trafficking of drugs, alcohol, addicts, prostitutes, noise pollution, smog, crammed apartments, and alleys smelling of urine. Thus, the only way to end poverty was not through pursuing a career but through joining an organization of boys that inevitably led to crime and imprisonment. Abram stated, "My desire already was not to be a schoolteacher or a policeman or a fireman. I said, 'I am going to be a gang member.'"

Therefore, the only feasible road to success was through intentionality; its purpose was to gain respect and self-identity through the gang (see Figure 1). In the gang, like a family, the members learned to interact and share their experiences with each other. Loyalty and respect were earned through acts of crime and obedience as good soldiers. They received immediate acceptance as individuals and brothers united by memories of family violence and the camaraderie of criminal warfare; they developed empathy as a result of their relations and psychological brokenness each represented. Consequently, there seemed to be an unconscious awareness deeply embedded and integrated in the psyche of the young men that reflected dormant suppressions of emotions, thoughts, and feelings ready to manifest to a perceived threat. Kirkegaard Thomsen, Tonnesvang, Schnieber, and Hammershoj Olsen (2011) contended that rumination that is internalized without self-reflection and goal setting is often associated with inner conflict due to the constant barrage of repetitive negative thoughts. In essence, unconstructive repetitive thoughts are linked to low self-esteem, anger, depression, and poor health. The young men internalized perceptions such as unworthiness, where they would tell themselves, *I am not good enough and I am like my father; I am bad*. The internalized perceptions were further implemented as disturbing thoughts, values, and norms as they experienced discrimination and prejudice from the dominant culture, which represented the external voice that harshly reminded them of their stereotypical label of criminal. Consequently, their impoverished ego sought a resolution to quiet the external and internal voice of unworthiness through power dominance of women, displays of aggression, extreme hypermasculinity, and avoiding all that equates to femininity and fear.

According to Mosher and Tomkins (1988), males inherit the masculinity of a

macho man through the virtue of being born male. Individuals with a macho orientation observe *superior masculine* effects and dishonor the portrayal of inferior effeminate aspects. Aggressive behavior, anger, and domestic violence are underreported in a dominant culture where the ideology allows patriarchy and hypermasculinity to be the culturally expected norms of a male. These norms and values are integrally immortalized in the cultural ideology. In essence, males have been socialized to the ideology of the sex role paradigm that observes power and respect as male inheritance. Men have become victims of societal expectations conformed to traditional male roles that accolades men as aggressive with constricted feelings, and subjugate women into submission (Mosher & Tomkins, 1988).

Machismo in Spanish translates to the essence or soul of masculinity. The destructive side is the extreme hypermasculinity that negates feelings and characterizes opposition, resistance, anger, hatred, and affects of anger and contempt. When all men are free from sexism and victimization, they will be able to embrace the feminine affects without shame or feelings of being unmanly. The ideal of construct of manhood is the balance of power that deemphasizes physicality, violence, and the submission of self and embraces the value of femininity.

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

This study did not focus on the general population of Mexican American men who were not gang members, so the findings may not be applicable to a broad population of Mexican American males. Most of the men interviewed in this study had been out of prison, had completed their parole, and had been working for 2 to 5 years. This study did not include other ethnicities, races, or cultures. Another consideration was the limitation

in the size of the study, which included six participants between 29 and 49 years old. A larger pool of participants could have led to significant results. Another delimitation of the study was that it did not use all six patterns of gender role conflict developed by O'Neil (1980b). The study focused only on one of the six patterns: restricted emotionality. The following gender role conflict patterns were not part of the present study: (a) socialized control, power, and competition; (b) obsession with achieving success; (c) restricted affectionate behavior between men; (d) health care problems; and (e) homophobia.

### **Implications for Future Studies**

The researcher sought to identify how male Mexican American gang members describe and experience masculinity. During the study, several discoveries revealed how the lived experiences of the six young men unfolded, including the rationality of their nature, behavior, and beliefs to the early roots of child development, family structure, and traumatic experiences. These inherently complex and distressing experiences united the men as both friends and brothers. The syndicate of brotherhood and friends appears as a menacing criminal lifestyle to the public. In reality, the local neighborhood often appreciates the gang culture as a barrier of protection from other gangs and the dominant culture. The gang community represents a social unit of fellowship with positive attributes to all its members. These attributes include recognition, shelter, protection, material wealth, and a voice they never possessed, all veiled through the recognition of their individual humanness. The young men have the same aspirations of the dominant culture, which is to gain respect, identity, and acceptance from the people who love them.

Clinicians need to educate themselves on their client's culture, specifically, their attitudes on help seeking and GRC. O'Neil (2012) posited that negative concepts about therapy develop through cultural norms, race, and masculinity ideologies that influence men to feel that they breached their identity and masculine power coming to therapy. O'Neil, (2012) noted Rochlen and Hoyer's work on using social marketing to attract men to therapy with high GRC by developing workshops or classes of empowerment rather than associate the help to therapy. These young men need to find their voice, in a safe and understanding environment, where professionals can redirect the men's experiences, emotions, feelings, and empower their masculine identity in a healthy direction. A place where men feel empowered and more importantly, an environment to regain trust outside their gang community.

Some of these young men had been in prison for over 10 years resulting in limited social skills and understanding of how to manage sadness, grieve and loss. The researcher contends that clinicians must be present without judgment and create a conceptual bridge to form and shape the relationship between two human beings (the clinician and the gang member). The young men came across as unpolished and uncensored in sharing their feelings and they lack knowledge in working collaboratively. The young men have an acute ability to read the character of a person and are adept in reading authenticity or a spuriousness character. Therefore, the key is transparency on the part of the clinician, which should encourage and affirm their steps toward trust and healing.

Future researchers may want to explore the relationship of neglect and the how it relates to aggression and violence. Another aspect of research would be to study how

neglect relates to restricted emotionality and depression. Additionally, further research is needed investigate how childhood trauma and PTSD relate to an increase of hypermasculinity and violence.

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## **Appendix A: Recruitment Letter**

Dear Participant,

My name is Lorraine Gray and I am a psychology student completing a dissertation study. I am conducting this study to increase the understanding of Mexican American male gang member living in a dominate culture.

The researcher is looking for Mexican American male former gang members ages 24 to 49 years of age. This study will require that the individuals to complete certain forms and participate in a one-on-one interview with this researcher. The forms and interview will take approximately 3-4 hours.

This is completely voluntary and if you decide to terminate from the study you may at any time. At the end of the study you will be given raffle ticket to participate in a two prize drawing. The first prize is a gift card for \$30.00 and the second prize is a gift card for \$20.00. The raffle will be conducted after this researcher has completed the research with each participant. The approximate date of drawing will take place on October 30<sup>th</sup>, 2014. The researcher will contact each participant by phone to inform him whether or not he won the raffle.

The data gathered will be held in the strictest confidence and the participant's identity will never be revealed at any time. The dissertation researcher hopes the results from this dissertation study will further increase awareness and appreciation of the Mexican American culture and provide information useful in the development of intervention programs for the Mexican American Community. If you would like to be considered for participation in the study, please contact me. I would be happy to discuss the study in further detail.

Thank you, for your help in my research study.

Sincerely,

Lorraine Gray  
Researcher  
Antioch University

Steve Kadin, Ph.D. ABPP  
Dissertation Chairperson  
Antioch University



## **Appendix B: Consent Form**

Project Title: PERCEIVED GENDER ROLE CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE:  
MEXICAN-AMERICAN MALES: GANG MEMBERS:

Project Researcher: Lorraine Gray, M.S.  
Dissertation Chair: Steve Kadin, Ph.D., ABPP

Dear Potential Participant:

My name is Lorraine Gray, and I am a doctoral student at Antioch University, Santa Barbara, California. Part of my doctoral degree program requires that I conduct a dissertation study. I will be interviewing you and asking a series of questions, with some being more personal than others. The questions will focus on your unique experiences as a Mexican-American former gang member. What does it mean to be a Mexican American male living in a dominant culture. The researcher will schedule an appointment to conduct the interview. If a follow-up interview is required this researcher will contact you. At the completion of the interview if you feel you need to process the interview further, this researcher will give you a referral to a local counseling agency.

The choice to participate in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. Participation in this survey is also confidentiality, meaning that no one will know who answered the interview questions. All transcripts, audio recordings and background information will be identified only by number code, not by your actual name. The consent form will be kept separate in a sealed envelope and not be associated with the fictitious name. The interview will last for at least 3 to 4 hours, and all sessions will contain written transcripts and be audio recorded. All information collected including recordings, transcripts, notes, will be secured in a locked cabinet and kept for seven years. At completion of the seventh year all recordings, notes and transcripts will be destroyed.

All information shared during the interview is confidential with the exception of limited of confidentiality which include: child abuse, elder abuse, dependent adult abuse, clear danger to self or to others. In other words this researcher is a mandated reporter and will report any of the stated limited of confidentiality explained in this paragraph.

The study is by voluntary basis. If you feel you do not wish to complete the study you may stop at any time completely withdraw from the study. If you feel uncomfortable with any of the questions or want to take a break, let me know and I can stop the interview. If you should have any questions or concerns you may reach Steve Kadin, Ph.D. (Dissertation Chair) who is the person in charge of this research project. His number is 805 962-8179 or you can reach this researcher Lorraine Gray.

Please sign your name and date below to indicate that you fully understand the intent and purpose of this study.

I understand the terms and conditions of participation in this study dealing with gender role stereotypes and attitudes towards others. At no time was I forced or coerced into participation, and I am signing this document of my own free will.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Lorraine Gray, M.S., Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Steve Kadin, Ph.D., ABPP - Committee Chair – Antioch University, Santa Barbara

### **Appendix C: Research and Interview Questions**

The following research questions were guided by the study. The research interview questions were formulated and based in three categories (cultural roots of patriarchy, restricted emotionality, and dominant culture norms) that this study explored below are the theories that helped in the formation of research questions.

- What is the influence of cultural roots of patriarchy in the Mexican American male gangs.
- What is the influence of restricted emotionality in a male gang population?
- What is the influence of the dominant culture norms on Mexican American males.

Theories used to formulate the research questions:

1. Men who hold strict gender limitation about women often experience more emotional restrictions and are less differentiated with more relationship problems; fear of the otherness of women (Blazina and Watkins, 2000, Millett, 2005; O'Neil, 1990).

Millett contended that the study of gender was initially intended to historically outline sexual politics, the subordination of women by patriarchal powers.

A new emergence has occurred as men recognize their victimization and oppressive sexism (O'Neil, 1981; Pleck 1976)

2. Mosher posited that the warrior mentality or macho personality is obtrusively violent to both men and women with a proclivity toward criminal and aggressive behavior.

3. Mahalik, Cournoyer, De Franc, Cherry and Napolitano (1998) described the causes of gender role expectations (a) Socioculture (usually the dominant society) has a significant impact in changing man's behavior; (b) the dominant society communicates its norms and expectations through (descriptive and cohesive norms); (c) a group or an individual in society (i.e., the same economic status, sex, gender and racial ethnicity) interprets how he sees or understands the norms of a dominant culture; (d) depending on the individual, acceptance or rejections of societal norms will determine how he will negotiate the level of his conformity or nonconformity. O'Neil (1981b) contended that the masculine mystique is comprised of values and beliefs of a given society or culture that characterize its expectations of masculinity. These values and beliefs are modeled to young children to learn the concepts of manhood.

#### **Three Interview Questions:**

1. What does it mean to be a Mexican American male and gang member?
2. As a male gang member what were your experiences with sadness and anger?
3. What were your experiences in accepting dominant cultural norms and expectations?

## Appendix D: Demographic Questionnaire

Your Code Number: \_\_\_\_\_

What is your age: \_\_\_\_\_

Highest level of education: \_\_\_\_\_

**Ethnicity:** (Please check all that apply)

- ☐ Hispanic American/Hispanic/Latino
  - ☐ White/Hispanic/Latino
  - ☐ Asian/Hispanic
  - ☐ Hispanic/African American
  - ☐ Other, please explain:
- 

**When I was growing up, I lived with:** (Please check all that apply.)

- ☐ Mother & Father
- ☐ Mother
- ☐ Father
- ☐ Grandmother/father
- ☐ Cousins
- ☐ Friends
- ☐ Aunt/uncle
- ☐ Foster parents
- ☐ Neighbor
- ☐ Streets

**Sexual Orientation:** (Please check one)

- ☐ Heterosexual
- ☐ Bisexual
- ☐ Homosexual
- ☐ Other

**Total Household Income:** (Please check one)

- ☐ Less than \$5,000
- ☐ \$5,000 to \$11,999
- ☐ \$12,000 to \$15,999
- ☐ \$16,000 to \$24,999
- ☐ \$25,000 to \$34,999
- ☐ \$35,000 to \$49,999
- ☐ \$50,000 to \$74,999
- ☐ \$75,000 to \$99,999
- ☐ \$100,000 and greater
- ☐ Other

**Relationship Status:** (Please check one)

- ☐ Single, living with partner
- ☐ Single living with family or friends
- ☐ Single
- ☐ Married
- ☐ Separated
- ☐ Divorced
- ☐ Widowed

**Employment Status:** (Please check one)

- ☐ Employed Full Time (FT)
- ☐ Employed Full Time (PT)
- ☐ Unemployed
- ☐ Self-employed
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Religious preference:** (Please check one)

- ☐ Christian
- ☐ Catholic
- ☐ Hinduism
- ☐ Judaism
- ☐ Buddhism
- ☐ Atheism
- ☐ Baptist
- ☐ Methodist
- ☐ Islam
- ☐ None
- ☐ Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**Who in your family was violent?** Please explain whether it was emotional, verbal or physical violence? (I added the last 4 based on prior question)

- ☐ Father
- ☐ Mother
- ☐ Brother
- ☐ Sister
- ☐ Cousin
- ☐ Grandfather
- ☐ Grandmother
- ☐ Aunt
- ☐ Uncle
- ☐ Foster Mother
- ☐ Foster Father

**History of family arrests** (please place a check of which of your family members were arrested in the past)

- ☐ Father
- ☐ Mother
- ☐ Brother
- ☐ Sister
- ☐ Cousins
- ☐ Grandfather
- ☐ Grandmother
- ☐ Aunt
- ☐ Uncle

**Alcohol Consumption:**

Last date you drank alcohol \_\_\_\_\_

How often do you drink alcohol?

- ☐ Daily
- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Monthly
- ☐ Weekends Only
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ I don't drink at all.

How much do you drink?

What street drugs do you use (if any) ? \_\_\_\_\_

For each of the following, indicate what the kind of violence have you experienced?  
Please place a check mark to the corresponding response.

Family Member	Domestic Violence – you witnessed or experienced	Sexual Aggression you witnessed or experienced	Physical Aggression you witnessed or experienced	
Mother				
Father				
Grandfather				
Grandmother				
Brother				
Sister				
Cousin				

At what age did you start using violence toward others? How did you feel during the moment you were violent? What about afterwards what was that experience like?

Can you recall an experience when you use rage toward a man or woman?

## **Appendix E: IRB Form**

### **11. Project Purpose(s): (Up to 500 words)**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine gender role conflicts (the inability to express emotions or feelings) experienced by former Mexican American gang members. Gender Role Conflict (GRC) was developed by James O'Neil in 1981 to identify areas of stress in masculine behavior, cognitions, affective behavior and unconscious patterns of behavior. Men who experience gender role conflict are usually labeled as hyper-masculine or having machismo behaviors. These behaviors include toughness, not showing emotions, and violence. These men who adhere to strict social expectations of masculinity, result in health problems and depression. This study hopes to help elucidate how the dominant culture society plays an active role in influencing the identity and behavior of a subcultural group, specifically Mexican American former gang members.

### **12. Describe the proposed participants- age, number, sex, race, or other special characteristics. Describe criteria for inclusion and exclusion of participants. Please provide brief justification for these criteria. (Up to 500 words)**

The participants selected will be Mexican American males between the ages of 25 – 49 years of age. The participants will be former gang members. The participants cannot be Mexican immigrants or any other Hispanic culture or different ethnicity. The participant cannot be a Mexican American female gang member. The participant must be willing to share his life experience as Mexican American male and gang member. The focus of the study is gender male issues and on a specific Latin population – Mexican American.



**13. Describe how the participants are to be selected and recruited. (Up to 500 words)**

Each participant will be recruited from local churches with a flyer that will be sent to various churches in Santa Barbara and Los Angeles, California. The interested participants will call the telephone number indicated on the flyer. Then the researcher will screen each participant over the phone. If the participant meets the requirements then the participant will be given an appointment. The participant's requirements are: a) the participant must be Mexican American male, b) former gang member, and c) between the ages of 25 – 49 years of age.

**14. Describe the proposed procedures, (e.g., interview surveys, questionnaires, experiments, etc.) in the project. Any proposed experimental activities that are included in evaluation, research, development, demonstration, instruction, study, treatments, debriefing, questionnaires, and similar projects must be described. USE SIMPLE LANGUAGE, AVOID JARGON, AND IDENTIFY ACRONYMS. Please do not insert a copy of your methodology section from your proposal. State briefly and concisely the procedures for the project. (500 words)**

The participant will be first explained that the consent form is for the purpose of collecting data. If the participant agrees to participate in the study, he will then given an informed consent to sign. The consent form contains the following: a) to participate in study, b) to be audio recorded, c) recordings will be transcribed by a separate entity, d) his participation is voluntary, and e) the results of the study will published in a dissertation. The procedure process will begin by explaining to the participant that what he shares with the researcher is confidential and for the purpose of maintaining the strictest confidentiality he will be given a unique code. This code will be used in all the forms (demographic/background information, audio recording, and transcripts, and notes. The researcher will refer to the participant by his unique code throughout the entire process to maintain confidentiality. The interview process will then begin by asking the

participant three questions related to his experience as a Mexican American male and gang member. The researcher will explain that the entire process may take as long as three to four hours with a possible follow-up over the phone.

**15. Participants in research may be exposed to the possibility of harm — physiological, psychological, and/or social—please provide the following information: (Up to 500 words)**

**Identify and describe potential risks of harm to participants (including physical, emotional, financial, or social harm).**

No known personal harm or imminent risk is anticipated (including physiological, psychological or social) to occur to the participant or researcher. The participant may experience personal discomfort associated with answering personal questions about masculinity and violence. The participant will be informed that he may quit at any time without any penalty or loss. Referrals to local mental health clinics will be available for any participant who feels he might require counseling to aid in the processing of any personal discomfort that might arise during or at the completion of the interview

NOTE: for international research or vulnerable populations, please provide information about local culture that will assist the review committee in evaluating potential risks to participants, particularly when the project raises issues related to power differentials.

**b. Identify and describe the anticipated benefits of this research (including direct benefits to participants and to society-at-large or others)**

This is a qualitative study on the affects of gender role conflict (specifically restricted emotionality) on former Mexican American gang members. The anticipated benefit of this study is to achieve more information and understanding in how the role of culture, family values, personal beliefs, and the dominant culture predisposes an individual to develop hyper-masculinity traits that later leads to violence. The purpose of this study may provide information as to when and how society may become involved in the preventative process of aggression and violence in the subcultures of gang violence.

The study hopes to provide a better elucidate understanding of subcultural populations their inherent values, which ascribe to gender role conflict and result in aggression and violence. The direct benefit to the participant is that he will learn more about his personal experience and how his life changed as a result of his attitudes, beliefs, values as a Mexican American male gang member. The participant's experience will make an important contribution to the field of psychology in the study of gender role conflict in a subculture population.

**c. Explain why you believe the risks are so outweighed by the benefits described above as to warrant asking participants to accept these risks. Include a discussion of why the research method you propose is superior to alternative methods that may entail less risk.**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to develop a better understanding of life experiences by Mexican American male gang members who experience gender role conflicts in their inability to express emotion and feelings openly without fear of vulnerability. The method utilized is interview questions that allow the participant to freely choose to answer the question without any influence or suggestion from the researcher. There are minimal to none risks to participate in this study.

Answering questions may bring up some uncomfortable memories of events, however the participant will be reminded that he may respond to questions freely or completely withdraw from the study. This qualitative study does not present any greater risks than a quantitative study that is developed to answer questionnaires without the one to one contact of researcher and participant in an interview format.

**d. Explain fully how the rights and welfare of participants at risk will be protected (e.g., screening out particularly vulnerable participants, follow-up contact with participants, list of referrals, etc.) and what provisions will be made for the case of an adverse incident occurring during the study.**

The participant will be explained: a) The nature of the study and purpose of the research, in which the participant has volunteered, b) That his right to privacy and all identifying information will remain confidential unless otherwise required by law, c) The participant has the right to contact any of the mental health agencies (the list provided by the researcher) to process any memories or feelings triggered during the interview, and d) The participant has the right to terminate from the study at any time or not answer any question if he does not wish to.

**16. Explain how participants' privacy is addressed by your proposed research. Specify any steps taken to safeguard the anonymity of participants and/or confidentiality of their responses. Indicate what personal identifying information will be kept, and procedures for storage and ultimate disposal of personal information. Describe how you will de-identify the data or attach the signed confidentiality agreement on the attachments tab (scan, if necessary). (Up to 500 words)**

Participants' background information will be identified through a random unique code at the onset of the study and no other form of identifying information will be used that could be associated to the participant. All digital audio recordings will be given the same unique code and erased five years after the study has been completed (anticipated completion March 2015). During the interview process (which will be recorded) the participant's will not be referred by either his first or surname to maintain the strictest confidentiality the code will be utilized throughout the interview. The transcripts, audio recordings, and consent forms will be kept separate in a locked cabinet to ensure confidentiality. To help assuage such events, the participants will be reminded that the

study is completely confidential. The consent form will be the only identifying information that connects the participant's code to the transcripts, demographic information and audio. The consent form will be kept in a separate locked cabinet to avoid any connection to the above instruments mentioned.

17. Will electrical, mechanical (electroencephalogram, biofeedback, etc.) devices be applied to participants, or will audio-visual devices be used for recording participants? (Click one)

No

**18. Type of Review Requested (Click one)**

Full

**Refer to the definition of review types in your paper documentation.**

**Please provide your reasons/justification for the level of review you are requesting.**

I am requesting for a full review because the research conducted will be on a vulnerable population of Mexican American male former gang members ages 25-49.

☐ I Agree I agree to conduct this project in accordance with Antioch University's policies and requirements involving research as outlined in the IRB Manual and supplemental materials. My research has been approved for submission by my departmental HRC representative, and by my advisor (if applicable).

**Attachments**

19. Informed consent and/or assent statements, if any are used, are to be included with this application. If information other than that provided on the informed consent form is provided (e.g. a cover letter), attach a copy of such information. If a consent form is not used, or if consent is to be presented orally, state your reason for this modification below.

\*Oral consent is not allowed when participants are under age 18.

☐

20. If questionnaires, tests, or related research instruments are to be used, then you must attach a copy of the instrument at the bottom of this form (unless the instrument is copyrighted material), or submit a detailed description (with examples of items) of the research instruments, questionnaires, or tests that are to be used in the project. Copies will be retained in the permanent IRB files. If you intend to use a copyrighted instrument, please consult with your research advisor and your IRB chair. Please clearly name and identify all attached documents when you add them on the attachments ta



Add all clearly labeled attachments for this application below (e.g. confidentiality agreement(s), questionnaire(s), consent / assent forms, etc.).

1. Consent form
2. Demographic Questionnaire
3. Research Interview Questions

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Student

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Department Supervisor

